[57] Chapter 4

## The Court of the Mogho Naba. Tribute and Payments Due. Obligations of Mossi Subjects to their Naba.

### Morning Honors Paid to the Emperor of the Mossi

The council of the emperor of the Mossi is held every morning in front of an antechamber called zango which opens out upon a very large courtyard.

The Mossi have for a long time regarded the sun as a "god." Wend'pous yan, "God shows himself," refers to the rising of the sun, but it is used in a figurative sense to refer to the emergence of the Mogho Naba. This illustrates the regard held by the Mossi people for their chief since he is compared to the star of daylight and thus to a "god."

The Mogho Naba appears each morning dressed in an ample red robe and with a red gourmousga (a kind of burnoose) folded and thrown over his shoulders. On his head he wears a cap, a fez, topped with a wazourfou sebré (literally, "silver paper" [streamers], that is to say, silver amulet). Red represents the light that comes with the appearance of the sun, while the silver on the cap represents the brilliance of the star itself.

Before the time set for the start of the ceremony, the three sogon'kassemsé (great servitors) bring into the courtyard the [58] cushion, nagpouré, and all the other insignia of office. As soon as the Mogho Naba appears, they arise and make a snapping sound with thumb and index finger to indicate that the naba is coming.

"Wend'pous yan" is also cried out by the gagando and luinsé (drummers) as soon as His Majesty sits down. The Bend'Naba [chief drummer] is the only one who does not beat his drum; instead, he rubs his finger back and forth over the waxed part of the drum head to imitate the roar of the lion. Four or five young men bearing loaded rifles take their places in front of the emperor.

Honors are rendered to the Mogho Naba in the following order.

1. The Samandé Naba, Baloum Naba, Wedranga Naba, and Simandé Nabila, as well as the Zusoabin'kassanga (chief eunuch and guardian of the emperor's household), are the first to greet His Majesty and to inquire about his health.

●644 2. Next come the Ouidi Naba, the Larralé Naba, the Kamsaogo Naba, the Gounga Naba, the Nemdo Naba, and the Poé Naba.

[527 788] 3. On Friday and other Moslem holidays, the imam who represents Islam at Ouagadougou comes to give the doua, a kind of benediction which consists of reciting verses from the Koran, in the morning as well as in the evening.

Lebeg'sonre. As soon as these honors have been completed, the Mogho Naba goes back into his house to put on a less dazzling costume. Shortly thereafter he once more returns to the courtyard.

[59] Next the Baloum Naba and his retinue present their respects as described above. The Ouidi Naba and his followers are not required to do so unless they have foreigners to present to His Majesty.

[533] Then, the Bend'Naba, gangando, and luinsé (drummers) and the doudissi (violin players) play together in praise of the Mogho Naba.

It should be noted that the Mogho Naba speaks to no one before his morning appearance. It is not until he has finished his ceremonial duties and returned to his apartments that his tampa (sisters) greet him.

644 273 Before the officials and ministers of the court return to their homes and as soon as the Mogho Naba has withdrawn, the Sogon'-kassanga, that is, the ranking servitor, offers them some dam (known as dolo or fermented millet beer).

1. One canari [jar] of dam is offered to the Baloum Naba, who is obligated to give a gourdful to the Zusoaba, one to the Wedkim Naba (chief groom), and one to the Soré Naba (Bendré, "chief of the path").

2. A canari of dam is then offered to the Ouidi Naba who is obligated to give a gourdful to the Poé Naba (chief confessor for the wives and pages of the Mogho Naba) and one koré [gourd] to the Bend'Naba. He drinks the remainder with the other ministers in his retinue.

[276] 3. On Fridays and holidays, kola nuts, gouré are offered to the imam after he has given his doua and before the Mogho Naba goes to renew his pledge of loyalty [60] to France before the representative of the Republic in Upper Volta.

644 431 The Mogho Naba spends the rest of the day receiving individuals who have come to see him, accepting poussoum (gifts to the chief) and giving dam, gouré, foutou (garments), etc., and listening to the praises of his courtiers.

Mogho Naba Na Tough'la, "The Mogho Naba Goes to La" (1)

1. A dependent village in the administrative district of Yako, Koudougou Circle.

173 644 [267] Tradition relates that a certain Mogho Naba, Naba Warga, had a favorite, the only one who knew that his preferred food was léla (fruit of the léhinga or wild plum tree). It should be added that ordinarily anything might be chosen as a favorite food, and it should not be supposed that the Mogho Naba eats only the best foods. Obviously he does not lack choice morsels, but he cannot be expected to like everything. One day this woman asked leave to visit her home at Lâ and failed to return. The Magho Naba, tired of waiting and missing his favorite food, had his horse saddled one morning and announced that he wished to go and join his wife. His ministers begged him to stay at home and asked him to put off his departure until the next day... Every morning the preparations for the departure were repeated and always there was the same pleading, up to the time of the ruler's death. His son, [61] who succeeded him, chose to follow his example. The following paragraph describes the manner in which this custom was still practiced only a few years ago.

[492] When the Mogho Naba appears in the morning, one of his horses, partially harnessed, is brought into the courtyard bearing a saddle with silver stirrups, but with the girth unbuckled. After the Mogho Naba has responded to the salutations of his ministers and the whole court and has dealt with some minor matters, he declares that he is going to Lâ. The court officials, especially the Kamsaongo Naba, appear before him and say: "Sire, order them to unsaddle your horse; you shall go tomorrow." The Mogho Naba of course agrees to this, but he retires to his apartments rather

173 abruptly, as though he were somewhat provoked by this obstacle
644 to what he wants to do. At the same time the saddle is removed and the horse returned to the stables.

It should also be noted that every morning the pougtiéma (first wife) orders a basket and hamper to be filled with all the things needed for a journey, intending to accompany her husband to Là.

As soon as the Mogho Naba postpones his journey to the following day, the pougtiéma, duly warned, unpacks her basket.

Today, the breath of civilization has blown upon these ancient practices, and the present Mogho Naba merely sees his horse, which is walked up and down while he is receiving his ministers. The animal is at once taken back to the stables when the [62] king returns to his palace without having tried to mount it, much less having heard any entreaties from the Kamsaongo Naba.

## Koaga Basgo

644 At sundown each day the Baloum Naba goes to the residence
789 of the Mogho Naba for the koaga. Only the Zusobin-Kassanga (chief eunuch) and the Sogon'kassanga (ranking servitor) assist at this performance. The koaga is a sort of earthenware basin into which is put a bit of fire and ... mystery. The head servitor places the koaga in the courtyard in front of the antechamber and blows on the fire, which quickly blazes up and then dies down. Meanwhile, the bendré (drummer) has been rubbing his hand back and forth over the waxed portion of the drumhead.

During the whole performance, no one is allowed either to enter or leave the house of the Mogho Naba. Anyone coming from
[687] the outside is not allowed to pass through the courtyard during the proceedings and anyone caught watching the koaga basgo was severely punished by the lash or even executed. When the performance is over, the Zusoba and the Baloum Naba, each of whom was seated at a particular place, arise, then approach and greet each other, and wait to be served some dam before separating for the rest of the night. They sometimes also salute the Mogho Naba before returning to their quarters.

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Ministers and Officials of the Court of the Mogho Naba

644 645 Ministers. (a) Ouidi Naba (literally, "chief of the horses," or superintendent of His Majesty's stables). In the old days the Ouidi Naba had the duty of choosing the color and kind of horse suitable for the Mogho Naba. He usually had charge of the horses of deceased chiefs.

202 644 If a kombéré (canton chief) owned horses during his lifetime, upon his death one of them is sent to the Mogho Naba in Ouagadougou as bearer of the sad news. Branches of the tahnga (karite [or shea] tree), wound with white rope, are tied to the horse's tail.

[64] The horse thus presented to the Mogho Naba is then handed over to one of the representatives of the Ouidi Naba who, after cutting loose the branches with a knife and leaving them in the courtyard of the Mogho Naba, leads the animal to Ouidin [section of the Ouidi Naba].

Unless the Mogho Naba gives the horse to someone, the Ouidi Naba is free to dispose of it.

645 (b) Larrhallé Naba, second minister of the Mogho Naba. Formerly he accompanied the Tansoba or Tampsoba to war.

In the section where the Larrhallé Naba now lives, there were once enormous trees whose leaves were constantly astir. When he was made a minister, the Larrhallé Naba said that he wished to dwell at the place "where the leaves on the trees are always astir" (tisse vand'sin y a lag, lag zighin wan). From this came the name of Larrhallé, which designates the section.

(c) Gounga Naba, third minister (1). His section stands in a

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1. Originally the Gounga Naba was the prime minister, and the title was his by right since he was a companion of Naba Oubri. One day, as he was attending to a natural need, he met a very handsome young man and offered his friendship to him; the latter accepted. Later he presented the boy to Naba Oubri who adopted him, settled him at court, and put him in charge of the royal stables. The Gounga Naba then said

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to the Mogho Naba: "Since I have come to you, give the first rank to this man. I will show him what he must do to please you. He will be the Ouidi Naba."

A man from Tansobongo, having heard that the Ouidi Naba was living in the greatest ease, came to see him. He, too, was a handsome youth. He was presented to the Mogho Naba (Naba Oubri) by the Gounga Naba who proposed the young man's appointment as second minister, the Larrhallé Naba, and reserved for himself the post of third minister.

So it came about that the Gounga Naba is the emperor's third minister.

645 place where there were once many goumsé (gounga, silk-cotton tree); hence, his name.

[126] He is a brother-in-arms of the Tansoba and always accompanied him to war, where he chose death rather than defeat, especially if the Tansoba had been killed.

644 (d) Baloum Naba, the chief steward of the palace and chief servitor of the Mogho Naba. He never goes to war, but remains always at the side of the Mogho Naba. It is his duty to carry out

[181] [65] sacrifices, such as killing the chickens or livestock offered to the manes or to the spirits when such sacrifices are prescribed by the soothsayers or other charlatans for the health and well-being of the Mogho Naba.

(e) Kamsaogho Naba, formerly accompanied the Tansoba to

[839] war. The Kamsaogho Naba is a eunuch, and for this reason he is commonly called Mogho Naba na poug'tiéma, "first wife of the Mogho Naba."

Other personages (not ministers). (a) Samandé Naba, in charge of all of the people in the outer courtyard of the Mogho Naba and a brother-in-arms of the Larrhallé Naba.

644 687 661 (b) Poé Naba, formerly the confessor for the wives and pages of the Mogho Naba. His duty, carried out by magical practices, was to denounce those wives or persons guilty of treason or of

attempted adultery. This practice (poéré) found many victims, and its suppression by the French was a real service to the Mossi, who were formerly murdered for a trifle. An ogling glance at a chief's wife was punishable by death. A man who met one of the wives of the Mogho Naba on the road was executed along with the wife. If one met a napagha [royal wife], he left the path and took to the bush. The woman herself would run off and return to the road only when she was sure that the man was a long way off.

Such is naturally no longer the case, and the wives of the Mogho Naba on their way to the market at [66] Ouagadougou no longer expect not to be looked at or even jostled. I hasten to add, however, that the Mossi still retain great respect for them and will even swallow serious insults, such as tampiri, "bastard," from a napagha if they are so unlucky as to offend them.

(c) Daporé Naba, chief of the section of the free or house slaves. It was formerly the duty of the Daporé Naba and his followers to massacre any pages or other convicted persons whose execution had been ordered by the Mogho Naba.

(d) Bend'Naba, chief of the drummers of the Mogho Naba.

(e) Soré Naba (literally, "chief of the path"), the drummer who always accompanies the warriors and who, therefore, even in time of peace, is allotted a horse.

If the enemy appears to be winning during a battle, the Soré Naba kindles the courage of the warriors of the Mogho Naba and constantly asks for a head, m'data zougou. This means that he is asking each warrior to forget himself and to think only of victory. In order to have a victory, the enemy must suffer such losses that they decide either to retreat or to surrender. Thus, the expression m'data zougou implies ruthless slaughter.

(f) Tansoba or Tampsoba, the war chief. The Tansoba of the Mogho Naba lives in a small village, Moussa, in the province of the Baloum Naba.

[67] When there is friction between the Mogho Naba and one of his vassals and there seems to be no hope of agreement, the Mogho Naba sends to the Tansoba for logdo (warriors armed with arrows). The Tansoba at once proceeds to Ouagadougou and stops at Baoghin. The emperor assembles his ministers and the principal dignitaries of his court and says to them: "I never thought that chief X, to whom I myself gave the pougla (red fez) would dare to

oppose me. I therefore demand that his fez be returned to me." To take away the fez of a naba is to dethrone him and reduce him to the level of his subjects.

The court officials, including the Tansoba, at once send emissaries to the chief at fault, asking him to choose between suicide (some take a poison called sounadré, while others kill themselves with a poisoned arrow) and war with the Mogho Naba.

If the chief is not prepared for such a summons, he kills himself, and the envoys return with the news.

If, on the other hand, he declares that he wants pouwega, that is, war and a noble death, he sends back the representatives of the ministers. A few days later, with drums beating and the Tansoba, chief of the army, at its head, the whole warrior band appears before his walls.

The Tansoba sends the Samandé Naba to the chief to ask him to confirm his declaration of war. If the naba still wants war, he usually replies: "Ya yingri bala la ka sakénian."

The Tansoba withdraws, sending word to the chief [68] to expect him back on a stated day (seven or eight days later); this period of time will enable the chief to assemble his warriors also. When the day arrives, it is a merciless battle, a massacre.

Often the forces of the Mogho Naba are victorious, and in that event the slaves, livestock, and other property go to those who seized them. Only the corpses belong to the Tansoba.

If an arrow, even a poisoned one, wounds the Tansoba, he must under no circumstances pull it out. Indeed, he must often endure thirst and hunger, and it is only when he is at rest in an enclosed place that the arrows are removed from his body. It should be noted that since the Tansoba's costume is virtually covered with amulets and other charms, he is not very likely to be wounded seriously by an arrow. This is not, of course, to belittle his bravery and composure in the face of danger, since he is expected never to retreat and, if the enemy is victorious, often prefers to kill himself rather than to report a defeat to the Mogho Naba.

There are, in addition to the foregoing, a great many petty naba whose role is not clearly defined and of whom it seems needless to speak.

643 651 178 Mossi circle into several administrative districts, still continue to make substantial annual gifts to the Mogho Naba (cowries, cattle, and a considerable amount of grain, millet and rice).

634 651 Payments Due the Kombemba (canton chiefs). Formerly each canton held one or more ritual feasts each year, and the Mossi subjects, that is, the tengsoba (village elders, notables, and those in comfortable circumstances), regularly made gifts to the canton chief (cowries, goats, sheep, and roosters). The Peulh [Peul] gave cattle.

The canton chiefs also retained a portion of the payment made by the people for the benefit of the Mogho Naba.

[178] At the present time these traditional gifts are still made, but white or light gray roosters are more and more being substituted for livestock. [71]

661 431 644 634 Payments due the Ministers of the Mogho Naba. In order to maintain good relations with the ministers, court officials, and intermediaries between the emperor and his vassals, the canton chiefs in former times used to present unspecified gifts to the high dignitaries at court when they paid their respects to the Mogho Naba. A certain number of cowries was given to the pougtiéma, first wife of the Mogho Naba (500 cowries equals two and a half francs, formerly 50 centimes).

A canton chief who has been called to Ouagadougou for some reason may choose not to call on the emperor, but he is obligated to bring cowries, a sheep, or a rooster to the minister who is head of the province in which his canton is located.

651 443 Common laws. (a) Regulation of market fees. Before the arrival of the French, market fees at Ouagadougou were collected for the benefit of the Mogho Naba by a collector in his employ.

In important villages, fees were collected by Gourounsi [Grunshi] captives on behalf of the canton chiefs (kombemba).

651 224 634 (b) Hunting. In former times, before the fields were cleared for seeding, the Mossi used to go out in groups of several villages on hunting drives. Small game (partridges, guinea fowl, hares, etc.) were left to the hunters. On the other hand, a haunch of any quadruped killed (deer, gazelle, coba [a kind of horse antelope], etc.) was reserved for the canton chief.

651 [72] (c) Fishing. Fishing in the larger water holes could take
226 place only by authorization of the canton chiefs. The day on
634 which fishing took place was treated as a holiday. All the young men in the village and their neighbors, even if the latter did not belong to the canton, came out on the day set by the canton chief and fished for the benefit of the naba. All large fish were reserved for him, and only the small ones were left to the fishermen.

This practice still prevails.

776 Other common laws. Many deities are worshipped by the
782 Mossi. Groves, fields, mountains, etc., all have their "god."
661 It often happens that the naba (canton chief), at the behest of the soothsayers, offers an animal. This may be a sheep, a goat, or even a cow, and it is offered to one or another of the deities, either for his personal interests or for those of his people, or perhaps to ask for rain. The naba dispatches some sogoné [servitor] or samand'kamba [people of the outer courtyard] to one of the villages in his canton to find a victim. The animal is taken without its owner having any right to complain or to ask for compensation. Is there not a Mossi saying to the effect, Talagh-gounda
[538] Naba'gninga the serf raises livestock for the benefit of his naba)"?

For sacrifices prescribed for the Mogho Naba, the animals are provided either by the inhabitants of the [73] town of Ouagadougou and its environs or by the canton chiefs.

## Labor Service Customarily Required of the Mossi on Behalf of their Chiefs

651 Forced labor was used to cultivate the fields of the naba and to repair or construct their houses.

● 647 The Mogho Naba. (a) Cultivation of fields. The duty of
651 cultivating the fields of the Mogho Naba fell entirely on the Bilbalsé,
241 the residents of Bilbalogo (section of the Baloum Naba) and on all former servitors and descendants of former servitors. The Kam Naba (chief of the young men), charged with assembling the workers, had a crier announce in all the important markets that on such-and-such a day the Bilbalsé were to assemble in the emperor's

644 651 241 fields. On that day, the Mogho Naba had one or two cows slaughtered and a large quantity of sagbo (millet cakes) prepared for the workers. If the latter, after being assembled two or three times in the manner indicated above, were not finished with all the fields, the work was carried on by the samand'kamba (the people who dwelt in the outer courtyard of the Mogho Naba).

644 574 The emperor, however, received none of the millet grown in his own fields, which, incidentally, did not have their present boundaries. This millet was reserved exclusively [74] for use as food for foreign visitors and for the feeding of horses (1).

1. For the ceremony of threshing this millet (kawinré), see the special chapter below [Chapter 16].

644 651 It was the duty of the canton chiefs and the ministers to provide loads of millet for the use of the Mogho Naba and his harem ("harem" should be understood to mean all young or middle-aged women, but to exclude the elderly women who have to support themselves and who have their private fields).

644 651 356 (b) Repair of the houses of the Mogho Naba. The work of building and repairing the houses actually belonging to the emperor fell entirely upon the inhabitants of Bilbalogo (section of the Baloum Naba), Kamsaonghin (section of the chief eunuch), and Dapoya (section of the slaves of the Mogho Naba).

[343] The outbuildings, wédanga, four round huts with thatched roofs located outside the emperor's house, served as stables for the horses given to the Mogho Naba by canton chiefs or other personages and were built and maintained by three ministers, the Ouidi Naba, Larrhallé Naba, and Gounga Naba, with the help of the people in their sections.

The tamping of the floors and clay roofs was done wholly by the wives of the persons responsible for [75] the construction or repair, that is, the wives of the ministers and of the inhabitants of their sections.

651 645 241 Labor service due the province chiefs, ministers of the emperor. (a) Cultivation of fields. The fields belonging to the ministers of the Mogho Naba were cultivated by a system of payments in kind as follows.

567 428 562 Were slaves part of an estate? Among the Mossi, the wives are part of an estate on the same footing as the rest of the property of the deceased. The same thing applies to the captives (yemsé) and dogyiri (house slaves) who constitute and integral part of the estate. They constitute a patrimony to be handed down from father to son in accordance with the customary order of succession. They remain the exclusive property of the legitimate heir and are not distributed as are the wives of the deceased.

[97] Chapter 6

## Djiba Naba, Crown Prince of the Mossi Empire

### Preliminary Remarks

644 In writing on this subject we have not tried to ascertain whether the canton of Djiba was once independent or whether it was under the direct authority of the Mogho Naba.

At the outbreak of the World War in 1914 the Djiba Naba, a brother of the present emperor, Naba Kom, was drafted into the army, and another brother had to be appointed to take his place. The latter's administration was in many ways unsatisfactory, so when the Djiba Naba, on his return from the front, had to be sent to Doulougou to replace a deceased son of Naba Wobgo, the Mogho Naba retained direct authority over the canton of Djiba. Meanwhile, his eldest son had returned from Tunis and had been officially named the chief of Djiba, but he had had to leave again for military service at Salonika. Thus, it can be said that even before the canton of Djiba had been made the prerogative of the eldest son of Naba Zombré, it had already been under the latter's authority.

It was during the reign of Naba Zombré, twenty-third Mogho Naba, that the eldest son of the emperor was given jurisdiction over the canton of Djiba. Naba Zombré, after Naba Niandeffo, had one of the longest reigns in the history of the country. He actually ruled for sixty years.

643 782 [98] An old tradition requires an emperor who has ruled for thirty years to go to Oubritenga to celebrate zom'bika (literally,

643 "to mount the bika").

782 Bika. When the emperor goes to Oubritenga, a large pit is dug in which all sorts of provisions are placed and, finally, a living man. Poles cover the opening of the tomb where the suffocated man lies, and the whole thing is covered with earth. A throne (guéré) is placed on the grave, and it is there that the emperor -- with little ceremony -- receives the faithful during his stay at Oubritenga. In carrying out this practice, the emperor is considered as having died and then come to life again. Hence, when he returns to Ouagadougou, after an absence which may last for years, he is welcomed by the populace with the greatest enthusiasm, and he must carry out all sorts of customary obligations just as he did at the beginning of his reign.

This custom is of course bound to disappear. In any event, if it were still an obligatory ceremony today, the man would no doubt be replaced by a rooster.

643 Naba Zombré went to Oubritenga to mount the bika and re-
644 mained there for three years. His eldest son acted for him at Ouagadougou and in the process acquired some fame and the esteem of the populace.

When his father returned, it was obviously necessary to bestow upon this prince, who had already tasted the "joys" of ruling and developed a real talent for command, a post of real distinction. Djiba was chosen. From that day on, [99] as soon as the eldest son of the Mogho Naba reaches the age of discretion, he is appointed Djiba Naba. It is thus understandable that Naba Kom, enthroned at an early age, was much disturbed when two of his sons were sent to Senegal and then to Tunisia.

644 The appointment of the Djiba Naba differs very little from that of other canton chiefs, but this naba has certain obligations which will be discussed below.

## Before Appointment

644 Before his appointment, the crown prince of the Mossi empire
782 first proceeds to the village of Zango where he must remain for a week. He must bring with him a sheep, a white rooster, and a cow which are to be given to the village chief for use in a sacrifice to

644 782 tenpelem (the earth) in order that he may have health, happiness, etc. In addition, he provides a bar of salt which is to be shared among the old women.

As he passes through Nonsin, he gives a sheep, a white rooster, and some salt for a similar sacrifice.

644 On the seventh day he returns to Ouagadougou and stops at Bilbalogo, the home of the Kam Naba (chief of the young men), whose guest he becomes. The Mogho Naba informs his ministers, and the day is set for the appointment.

The customary formalities are nearly identical with those required for the appointment of canton chiefs (kombemba).

[100] After Appointment

On the day following his appointment, the Djiba Naba calls upon his father. A cushion (nagpouré) is placed near a shed in the emperor's courtyard at the foot of a special stake called the "zandaogo of the Djiba Naba." The Djiba Naba becomes the guest of the Gounga Naba, in whose section he will henceforth stay whenever he comes to Ouagadougou. (At the present time, because of the enmity between the emperor and his brothers, the Djiba Naba stays at Kamsaoghin [section of the Kamsaogho Naba], not far from his father's house.)

644 557 He then has to call upon his father's ministers, and precedence requires him to visit the Ouidi Naba, the prime minister, first. As soon as the latter is notified of the arrival of the Djiba Naba, he offers him a sheep, some dam (beer) and some kola nuts.

Then the crown prince goes to the Larrhallé Naba, who is required to present him with the same gifts, and thence to the Kamsogo Naba, chief eunuch, where the same honors are rendered to him and where he is also given a sheep, beer, and kola nuts.

He next calls upon the Gounga Naba, the Poé Naba, the Samande Naba and, finally, the Baloum Naba, from whom he receives many gifts.

On the third day he completes his visits by calling upon the imam who represents Islam at Ouagadougou. There he is offered water containing [millet] flour and honey, as well as kola nuts.

644 554 576 [101] It is to be noted that a gourdful of this water with millet flour on which a bit of karite butter is floating is a customary courtesy offering among the Mossi. It is most improper to greet or to receive a stranger by offering him plain water.

644 782 On the fourth or fifth day the Djiba Naba proceeds to Zoanghna (a village located two or three kilometers behind the government buildings) and there hands over a sheep and a cow to serve as offerings to the sacred amulets of the ancestors and to protect him from evil spirits and wicked people. He does not spend the night in this village but returns home immediately after the sacrifice.

644 788 Several days later the decision is made to install the new naba in his domain. A large number of soroné, drummers, and followers accompany him on what amounts to a kind of obligatory pilgrimage which we shall describe briefly.

The following itinerary is customary.

First, the Djiba Naba goes to Badnogo where he spends the night. The next day he goes on to Samba where he is offered water with flour in it, and for his part, he gives salt to be shared among the old women of the village.

One may ask why salt is given to the old women and not to the other people. The Mossi call old women nough' pouk ramba, [889] that is, those who, when blessing you, clasp their hands so as to make a higher power hear and grant their prayers.

644 788 431 [102] On the following day he proceeds to Tensobitenga where he remains for three days. Beer is prepared for him; he is given a cow for his followers and a wife for himself. At Nakamtenga, his next stop, the village chief welcomes him with a sheep and many baskets and bowls of sagbo (millet mush).

644 788 He does not remain here for the night but instead goes on to Koubri. This is the village where eunuchs formerly suffered the cruel operation of castration (1). The canton chief meets him, leads

839 304 681 1. Eunuchs. Bandits, thieves, murderers, and slaves or soroné (servitors) convicted of adultery with women of the nobility were the only ones sent to Koubri, a canton in the circle of Ouagadougou, to be castrated. This operation involved only the removal

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of the testicles, until the day when a eunuch managed, no one knows how, to take advantage of some of the women he was supposed to be guarding. From then on it was deemed necessary to remove the penis completely, and a copper cartridge was inserted for purposes of urination.

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As soon as the person fainted after undergoing the operation, a drink was concocted whose ingredients are unknown. When he revived, he was so thirsty that he downed the drink in a single gulp. It is said that the drug stupefied the eunuch to such a degree that he would be incapable of taking vengeance even if he had any weapons at hand.

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It was only after he had completely recovered that the victim was sent to the Mogho Naba. The latter assigned him the duty of guarding a harem or a royal tomb.

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him to his house, seats him by his side, and announces to the populace that he has just been visited by his son (Koubri Naba is a descendant of the Mogho Naba).

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He then offers the crown prince a cow and a great deal of [103] beer, and then, before he leaves, the Djiba Naba has free access to the chief's household where he takes as a wife the first nubile girl he encounters. The stay at Koubri traditionally lasted for seven days, but it could be shortened to two or three in view of the great expense involved in entertaining a prince of such high rank, especially at the present time when the canton chiefs no longer enjoy their former prestige.

The Djiba Naba continues on his way to Kombissiri where he is the guest of the canton chief. For a week, in addition to his food which must, of course, be copious and abundant quantities of beer, the crown prince also receives a cow, a sheep, and, before his departure for Doulougou, a wife.

[i.e. canton chief — Analyst]

644 788 431 The chief of the canton of Doulougou, where the prince is a guest for another week, also gives him beer, a sheep, a cow, a robe, and, finally, a wife.

At Bagamini, where he goes next, he receives from the canton chief a cow, a wife, a quiver, and arrows, presented with these significant words: "Ad locko la pema taon widi, laf ra taon neb'yé ti ya f'ba yemsé" (literally, "Take these arrows to shoot against horses and not against men, for the latter are your father's slaves and the country also belongs to him and therefore to you").

Seven days later he leaves Bagamini and goes to Ipelsé where he receives the same warm welcome. On leaving, he will take with him a cow and a wife.

He likewise remains at Ipelsé for seven days. Passing through Bedgo in the domain of the Peulh chief, the Djiba Naba chooses the finest [104] bull from the herd of cattle which must be presented to him. He likewise takes a girl from the chief's household who becomes his property. He then goes on to Guirgo where he is guest of the canton chief for a whole week. On his departure he receives a cow, a robe, and a wife from the chief.

The inhabitants of the village of Kakamsé, through which the Djiba Naba merely passes, bring him quantities of millet cakes (sagbo) and a gift of their choice (a sheep, a goat, a cow, cowries, beer, etc.).

The crown prince continues on to Kondrin and remains there for three days. In addition to sagho and dam, the chief of Kondrin is required to offer him a cow and a wife before his departure.

From there he proceeds to Béré where the chief, called Rimbissi Kasma (the oldest descendant of the Mogho Naba), gives the Djiba Naba a cow, a robe, and a wife and acts as his host for a week.

644 788 824 During the night of the seventh day, the notables of the canton of Djiba come to Béré to look for the naba. He allows himself to be led away, accompanied by only a single servitor and a groom. The rest of the escort from Ouagadougou remains behind and follows him the next morning (1).

1. Why this departure at night and seeming escape? On the route leading into his

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dominion, the Djiba Naba must pass under a tree whose branches he should be able to touch since he is on horseback. His whole future depends upon his doing so. It is from this day forward that the prince will have a long life and will succeed his father. It is believed that the tree has magical powers and that its branches will withdraw of their own accord as the prince passes by if, even though he is the emperor's eldest son, he is not the successor designated by Wendé (God).

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[105] In advance of his coming, care has been taken to find a nice dwelling suitable to house a prince who is the emperor's eldest son. With this in view, an establishment has been chosen which is well built and fairly large, one belonging to a dakangré (prosperous man), and His Highness is conducted to it. As soon as the Djiba Naba has dismounted, his involuntary host must leave his home and take shelter with one of his neighbors. He takes great care to gather all his property, money (liguidi) and wives, into one part of the house; the rest henceforth belongs to the naba. Indeed, it is not long before the establishment is enlarged and some of the huts demolished to make way for more sumptuous buildings.

As soon as the prince is installed, the displaced host receives some gifts and wives as a kind of indemnity for loss. A suitable house is built for him a few hundred meters away.

For several days, celebrations are the rule throughout the canton of Djiba. All the notables and village chiefs, including neighboring canton chiefs who have not had the honor of receiving the prince, come to pay their respects to the new naba and to bring him large gifts.

The escort from Ouagadougou is then sent back [106] with many gifts. The most important nayirdamba [court dignitaries] receive wives and clothing.

Besides the wives the Djiba Naba may have had before his appointment, it is to be noted that he collected quite a harem

644 788 during his peregrinations. He will bestow some of these on his followers and keep the prettiest for himself.

431 In the old days, the Boulsa Naba, Boussouma Naba, Konkisitenga Naba, and all the others who were, so to speak, independent "rulers" of their lands never brought annual tribute to the Mogho Naba without sending gifts to his eldest son at Djiba.

In the same way, the canton chiefs were expected to make the same annual gifts to the Djiba Naba as to his father.

644 696 It should also be noted that chiefs who had quarreled with the Mogho Naba and were in danger of being executed could readily obtain pardons by the expedient of buying the friendship of the Djiba Naba. The emperor, after all, was reluctant to distress his son by putting to death one of his intimates.

[107] Chapter 7

The Mossi Salute. Respect due the Home of a Naba.
The Cap. Precedence among Chiefs.
A Legend Concerning the Origins of Mossi Chiefdom.

Salutation of the Naba (Nab'Pousgho)

647 The kombemba (canton chiefs) and nayirdamba (ministers and other court dignitaries), when calling upon the Mogho Naba, are required to remove their cap when they reach the threshold. They hand it to their sorone (servitors) or followers. If they did not come on horseback, they must give their néoda (shoes) to a page and walk barefoot. In a word, they remove anything which might impede the execution of the very complicated Mossi salute.

The following passages concerning the Mossi salute are taken from Father Mangin.

Mossi Salute

644 576 "The Moaga puts down everything, load, hat, cap, and sword, removes his shoes, and sits on the ground. He folds his legs slightly and bends the upper part of his body forward. The elbows rest on the ground, spread as far apart as possible. The forearms, folded

in front of the chest, and the half-closed hands with thumbs raised together strike [108] the ground three or four times. Then the Mossi raises his body a little and rubs the palms of his hands together. He never looks at the face of the person he is saluting, but keeps his eyes slightly lowered. It is truly a very humiliating posture, especially when the chief who is being saluted remains standing or on horseback, towering above his subordinate and barely according him a glance.

"The women, instead of striking the ground with their forearms, hit it with the elbows and raise their open hands, fingers extended, to shoulder height.

"The grand salute, (1) very rarely used, consists of turning

1. Father Mangin neglected to mention that this salute is used only when the chief or other personage has given a wife, a robe, or some other gift to the person who is saluting him. Furthermore, those present cover their foreheads with dust.

around after the ordinary salute has been completed, taking some dust in both hands, spreading it on the forehead, and then saluting once more.

"When two natives who know each other meet along the way, the younger of the two squats first and begins the salute, which the other acknowledges by squatting in turn. If they are carrying loads, they set them down before saluting. They are never in a hurry. Servants and women, when they walk before a chief, bow slightly and join their hands in front of the chest. Though complicated, the Mossi salute is rendered easily and gracefully by the natives; they are used to it from an early [109] age and never perform it in the clumsy and awkward manner which is theirs when they attempt to imitate the military salute."

## Respect Due the Home of the Naba

554 The kombéré is absolute master of his territory. His subjects must show him the same deference as he himself shows to the Mogho Naba.

However, even though he is not a noble, a minister of the emperor need not remove his cap to respond to the salute of a kombéré. On the contrary, the latter is required to humble himself, to give way before him just as he would before the Mogho Naba.

● 644 The nabiga (son of a naba), nakomsé (descendants of naba) and, still more, an ordinary Moaga are all categorically forbidden to wear their shoes or their caps at the court of the naba. The only exception to the rule is when the person is a Moslem convert, but even then he always leaves his shoes at the door. He may, however, wear his cap or turban. Shoes and headgear may be put on again only after the subject is 300 meters from the house of the naba. Sometimes, in places where custom is rigorously enforced, the person must be out of sight.

[687] Any infraction of these rules was punished severely by the lash and by confiscation of property by the samand'kamba of the naba [110] when the offender was not of the nobility, that is, was neither nabiga nor nakombga.

291 It is interesting to note that wearing the fez, originally one of the badges of chiefdom, was forbidden to the nabiga and all the more to the talga (ordinary Moaga). Today it is commonly worn by men and youths since European traders and shops have made common an article which was once very rare.

576 Shaking hands. One seldom sees a naba extend his hand to one
413 of his subjects or, more especially, to his brothers or fellow nobles (nakomsé).

There are two reasons for this prohibition: 1) the naba is supposed to maintain a certain distance between himself and his subjects, a normal practice; and 2) a superstitious belief has it that persons [154] harboring evil intentions toward the chief put magic powders on their hands to cause swellings which may develop into real abscesses.

576 643 Thus, although the Mogho Naba would not in the least object to shaking hands with a Bambara or a Djerma, he would be astonished if a native Moaga -- even an official -- should offer his hand.

573 576 As soon as the children of a naba have reached the age of discretion, they may no longer play with their "papa," even less shake hands with him. They must henceforth follow the general rule which requires the Mossi salute, kantissé.

576 602 [111] Nowadays naba (kombemba) and nayiridamba (ministers of the emperor) understand the uselessness of such signs of distrust. Therefore, even though they continue to be less familiar with their relatives (brothers, uncles, and sons -- whom they regard as rivals), they willingly offer their hands to Mossi of any standing and to foreigners.

644 Reception by the naba. 1) Up to the present time and despite some thirty-five years of French occupation, the way one is received at the court of the emperor, which, of course, befalls his servitors, has altered very little. Natives who are now officials in the administration and in business enterprises are still treated on the same footing as their less highly placed compatriots. Not only are they required to perform the kantissé (Mossi salute) as described by Father Mangin, but also afterwards they must sit on the ground, a position that is difficult in European clothes. Foreigners (Bambara, [648] Djerma, even Gourounsi) are offered seats because the soroné do not regard them as fellow countrymen.

645 576 352 177 2) By the ministers. At the present time all the emperor's ministers have comfortable houses and splendid drawing rooms furnished with Morris chairs and folding chairs. These seats are offered [112] to visitors of any standing, while benches two or three meters long are reserved for persons of less consequence (house boys, cooks, circle guards, notables, etc.).

631 576 352 3) By the kombemba. Benches are always reserved for visitors of note or, if there are none, mats are provided. Some of these chiefs even own a few commonplace chairs and perhaps one or two folding chairs.

644 Ministers and other officials at the court of the Mogho Naba. In the courtyard where the emperor's audiences are held, [114] there are heaps of stones to mark the places of the ministers and their followers.

The Ouidi Naba, Larrhallé Naba, Gounga Naba, and Kamsaongho Naba assemble with their followers. The Baloum Naba, Zusobinkassanga, and the rest also have their fixed places. They are not permitted to leave their places to greet one another until they have saluted the Mogho Naba.

In the old days only the Baloum Naba, the Zusoaba, and the Kamsaogho, together with the servitors and grooms, were allowed to call upon the emperor in his palace courtyard. The other ministers and court officials (Ouidi Naba, Larrhallé Naba, Gounga Naba, etc.) were not, under any pretext or circumstance, permitted to penetrate the interior courtyard of the home of the Mogho Naba. They had their presence announced by soroné and [344] waited under a shelter (benda zandé) in the audience courtyard. Only a few years ago, when the present Gounga Naba succeeded his father, he asked the reason for this prohibition. Since no good reason was given, he asked the emperor for permission to break the rule, and since that time all his colleagues have followed suit.

644 The cap. We have seen that at the time of his appointment 292 [115] each minister, court official, and canton chief is presented 554 with a cap by the Mogho Naba. Obviously he cannot wear the same cap for the rest of his life, so later replacements bought by him are regarded as just as sacred as the original. All his subjects, even the son of a naba, are strictly forbidden to wear this cap. We have also seen that in the old days an ordinary Moaga was expressly forbidden to wear the red fez (1) since this was the type of headgear

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1. Among the Habè [Habe] the hogon is the only one who may wear the red fez. When young Habè men are taken into the [French] army as riflemen, they never again wear the red fez [part of the army uniform] after they are discharged and return to their homes.

644 conferred by the Mogho Naba on the canton chiefs.

292 554 With the exception of the Tenkodogo Naba and, more recently, the Boussouma Naba, neither of whom renders honors to the Mogho Naba, all ministers, other petty dima, and chiefs of Mossi cantons must take off his cap to greet the emperor.

576 554 645 (a) Between ministers. The Ouidi Naba does not remove his cap for any of his colleagues.

The Larrhallé Naba, Gounga Naba, and Kamsaongo Naba are equals and greet each other with their caps on.

The Baloum Naba and Samandé Naba are also equals, and they do not take off their caps when greeting each other. However, they were required to remove their caps (pougla) and even to perform the kantissé in the presence of the three principal ministers.

[116] Next in importance are the Nemdo Naba or "chief of the meat" [in charge of slaughtering], the Poé Naba who is confessor to the emperor's wives, the Bend Naba, chief of the drummers, and, finally, a whole string of petty chiefs of no importance who can hardly be distinguished from the general populace and whom it would be fruitless to enumerate here.

The Poé Naba may keep his cap on when he is in the presence of the Baloum Naba or the Samandé Naba, but he must remove it for the other ministers and must even prostrate himself to perform the kantissé.

645 574 Not very long ago, when the province chiefs of Ouagadougou possessed neither comfortable houses nor furniture, the ministers rarely visited each other. I have even once seen a minister sit on the ground in order to give his seat to one of his colleagues.

645 Whenever matters came up which required a meeting, the ministers met at night in one or another of their homes without the knowledge of the public.

645 576 Today, the principal ministers have proper reception rooms. They can, therefore, remain seated when a more important colleague calls upon them and limit their special consideration of the visitor to offering him a Morris armchair or a folding chair.

701 554 645 The Tensoba, the minister of war, never takes off his cap for a minister or a canton chief. He does so only before the emperor.

631 new naba mounts his horse and goes off with the minister who has jurisdiction over him. The minister offers him some zom kom (water with flour in it) and then welcomes him into his courtyard where he is offered a canari of dam (beer) and gouré (kola nuts). He is then escorted back to the home of his gangsoba by a goodly throng of drummers, horsemen, etc.

631 All the defeated candidates are required to shave their heads at once and to make a formal act of submission to the new naba 302 as soon as he has returned to the home of his gangsoba (host). It should be added that the candidates allow their hair to grow from the day of the death of the naba to the day on which his successor is appointed.

631 The new appointee must offer dam, saghbo, and cowries to the 431 nayiridamba. He also offers dam, kola nuts, and cowries to the drummers.

631 On the following day he accompanies the minister to the home of the Mogho Naba. During the monarch's second audience (beg sonré), 644 the minister calls him to salute the Mogho Naba. The new naba goes forward to the tomboko, cries out three times (cries of joy), and then performs the kantissé (the Mossi salute). Thereupon, the Ouidi Naba says to the Mogho Naba: "The chief whom you deigned to honor yesterday wishes to express his gratitude." The Mogho Naba responds to the salute and then, for the [illegible] time, offers him a canari of dam.

The new naba then calls upon the ministers and other important personages (Ouidi Naba, Larrhallé Naba, Gounga Naba, [144] Poé Naba, Kamsoro Naba, Samandé Naba, the imam, Daporé Naba, and the next day the Zusoaba).

Seven days later the Mogho Naba gives him a robe, a pougla (red fez), a nagpouré (cushion), and néoda (slippers).

The new naba removes his old ragged clothes (I use the description advisedly, since custom forbids him to change his clothes until he has received those given by the Mogho Naba). He gives the discarded garments to a relative, dresses in the robe from the Mogho Naba, puts on the pougla (fez), and becomes a true naba.

631 A few days later he asks permission to return to his own lands. Many court representatives (nayirdamba) accompany him. It is the

769 they return to their homes.
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533 The Bend'Naba and other drummers remain in the courtyard until the Sogon' kassanga (chief eunuch) bring to them, on behalf of the emperor, the sum of 10,000 cowries and some beer. In the old days a young captive, seated amidst the cowries, accompanied these gifts. The messengers say to the drummers: "Nab'yet b'wa poustabo (the king sends us to give you these gifts on the occasion of his basgha)."

The chief of the drummers pours a drink for the Zussoba and orders his followers to play together "Tompaongo, Wend'kaouss'Naba nioré, Wenna wilig'vinré" (literally, "We thank the king for his gifts. May God give the Mogho Naba long life and allow us to come back to play here next year").

Before sending them away, the Mogho Naba is obligated to give a karfo (black robe [158] imported by the Haoussa) to the Bend' Naba and a robe to the Loun Naba (chief of the luinsé). Water with flour in it is likewise brought to the Bend'Naba, and he scatters it about the courtyard. The emperor is required by custom to walk upon this water of gnimassem (of good health) as he goes back to his apartments.

When all these formalities have been completed, the Bend'Naba, accompanied by his bards, takes his leave. The festival is over.
[431] On the days following, the drummers call on the ministers and the other court dignitaries and are given many gifts (cowries and livestock).

All of these gifts are retained by the Bend'Naba or by someone chosen by him, and they are distributed later, with due regard for the hierarchy existing among the griot. The share of the older men is always greater than that accorded to the younger ones. [159]

## Chapter 10

### The Wives of the Naba. The sogoné. The Pogsiouré

### Naba Warga and the Origin of the Sogoné

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● 644 Naba Warga was constantly at war with the Riziam Naba, who
357 was called Mamzi (which means "I myself do not know"). He had

173 644 351 to be on the field of battle himself and for five years was unable to vanquish his enemy who was entrenched on a mountain and well supported by the local inhabitants.

After Warga had tried every means at his command to conquer his enemy, he hacked down the crops, which were almost ripe, and captured all the livestock that ventured down the mountain. In short, he devastated the country.

This succeeded so well that at last the local inhabitants, faced with famine, had to choose between the life of the chief they were sheltering and their own lives. Mamzi was therefore handed over and imprisoned at Saponé (1).

1. The principal canton town in the district of Ouagadougou.

During the five years of this difficult campaign, Naba Warga, aside from the warriors, had only a young boy to serve him since his wives were not present. The boy served as cook [160] and personal servant. In short, he performed the duties of a wife so well that Warga decided that he was worthy of some notice and decided to reward him.

When he had returned to his lands, he freed this faithful servitor after first giving him a wife. Then it occurred to him that several children in his court could perform the same services. He therefore ordered them to be recruited on a large scale, and these were the sogoné.

357 644 Every boy recruited to become a sogoné can expect to be given a wife, however little she may be worth, when he is freed.

[554 304] The sogoné have the same standing as the napagba,[1] and they wear the same ornaments. A group of bracelets worn on the wrists, in fact, distinguish the napagba and the sogoné from free women.

It is their duty to serve the naba. They form a half circle around the naba when he appears; they accompany him on his short outings; and they carry the scepter and all of the insignia of chiefdom. They serve drinks to the naba, fan him when he takes a nap [293] with fans called fika, make his bed, and do various errands. Likewise a naba never sends anyone but a sogoné to take a message to his wives.

1 [i.e. royal wives — Analyst]

644 357 292 The sogoné may not wear trousers. He wears a type of drawers called benda. All the nanamsé (plural of naba) have followed the example of Naba Warga, and nowadays the most insignificant kombéré has at least a dozen sogoné.

[161]

The Napogré. General Conditions. Number of Wives of the Emperor Today. Ornaments.

644 595 Depending on whether the napagha is destined for the chief himself or for one of his brothers or sons, the instruction of the napogré are given either in the quarters of the pugtiéma (first wife of the naba) or at the home of one of the old nabissi.

644 595 302 Water is heated and in it is put a bit of karite butter and other ingredients. After the girl's head, armpits, and public hair have been shaved by some old women, the pugtiéma or the old man dips a hand into the water, utters certain cabalistic words, and gives the names of all the chiefs who have succeeded each other up to the father of the current ruler.

644 595 The water is then given to the old women who bathe the young napagha. It is at this time that she is instructed in the duties and obligations of the napogré, what she may do and what she should avoid.

[301] The new wife is then adorned with bracelets, kouaba (plural of kobré), and with rouamba [ankle rings], or with only bracelets. The chief may marry her at once or, depending on the circumstances, send her to the man for whom she is destined.

[684] The napagha must never have relations with any man other than her husband as long as she lives. Formerly she was pitilessly killed if she broke this rule. [162]

[302 301] As we have just seen, the napagha has no hair, and this is the primary distinctive mark. Also, she wears bracelets on her wrists, sometimes even on her arms and some on her ankles (this is done mostly by favorites). Finally some wear kouaba, ornaments most often worn by old women.

The number of wives or napagha varies according to the importance of the naba and especially according to the desires of naba. According to the 1926 census, the present Mogho Naba had thirty-seven wives.

644 595 562 587 It should be said that the napagha, who is regarded as a piece of property, is part of the estate of a deceased chief. The new naba takes some of the old and young wives, and the rest are kept in the family of the nabissi. It is therefore not unusual to find women in the household of a naba who have been married to two or even three deceased chiefs. If they are not too old, they may give birth to children of the chief who is their second or third husband.

644 595 The establishment of a naba is often divided into three sections.

1. The zagkas sanga (the great house). All the old women, the unwanted ones, live here. Their mistress and guardian is the pugtiéma, who has charge of the house where the kimsé or manes of the ancestors live.

2. Zagbilin. The middle-aged women [163] who are still occasionally visited by their husband live here.

3. Dogoundba. This is the assemblage of several young and beautiful wives grouped around the favorite. They are called dogoundba, "guardians of the hut of the naba." These women receive all the favors, wear the finest ornaments, and are dressed in [291] godé (1). Most of the time the dogoundba live in one or several

1. A skirt that is highly valued among the Mossi.

huts, depending on their number.

Each of the women in the other two sections has her own hut.

Since the naba has too many wives to be able to look after all of them, they must provide their own clothing and food. Hence, they are forced to cultivate plots and sell some of their produce. Each napagha has her own small field of millet, peanuts, beans, and peas.

The dogoundba have a collective plot. They help their husband who not only has to feed them, but is also required to support [357] the sogoné and the samand'kamba (the latter are "people of the outer courtyard," another category of servitors who are sent on errands to the villages or who serve as grooms).

In the homes of the kombemba (plural of kombéré), it is the duty of the dogoundba to prepare food for the sogoné and for any

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595 foreigners who are being housed by the naba. [164]

644 Each sogoné or samanbiga chooses a mother from among the
595 wives of the naba (only those in the first two sections).

He helps her to cultivate her plot of ground and receives in
357 return a little food over and above the ration of sagbo given to the
608 sogoné as a group.

At Nanore (1), for example, it was formerly the rule that

> 1. Canton in the administrative district of Koudougou.

when a woman brought some sagbo to her adopted son, she could not simply hand it to him. Instead, holes were dug in the courtyard of the naba, into which the woman put the sagbo and sauce. Then the young man came to eat the food, and later the woman came back for her bowls.

644 Finally, it is still forbidden for anyone to play a guitar when
595 a napagha is passing by unless the player is the naba himself or
533 someone called upon to play by the naba. It should be noted that
687 the Moaga prefers the guitar for intimate occasions. Therefore, to
832 play it when a napagha passes by is actually to court her.

## The Pogsiouré, or the Recruitment of Sogoné and Saman'kamba

643 Aside from a few special cases limited by custom which we
562 shall presently describe, the naba can never dispose of the daughters of his subjects, either to make them [165] his own wives or to bestow them on someone else, without the permission of the parents.

Pogsiouré comes from pog', the diminutive of pagha, "woman," and from siouré, diminutive of sioubo, "to give anticipating a profit."

562 As a result of family quarrels or even voluntarily, a Moaga
431 "may give away his daughters and those of his brothers and close
643 relatives to the naba." It is obvious that the naba cannot keep all of these girls, so he gives some of them to his brothers, his uncles, his sons, and even to ordinary Mossi who have done him a service.

In the same way -- and this is more frequent -- every sogoné (page) or samand'biga [singular of samand'kamba] (bodyguard or

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431 groom) who has served his naba satisfactorily receives, at the
643 time he is freed, a young girl who may be nubile, but who may, on the other hand, be just a small child.

In either case, the former servitor is required to call upon the naba from time to time and to take him gifts (cowries or roosters). If the girl is still living with her relatives, in addition to his trifling presents to the naba, the fiancé may make a few presents to his in-laws, although it is not obligatory.

562 Pogsiouré. The first daughter born of a marriage between a
643 Moaga subject (former servitor, son, brother, or uncle of the naba,
644 etc.) and the woman given to him [166] by the naba becomes the
858 "property" of the latter with full rights over her. She is known as "the daughter of the pogsiouré" and is fated to become pogsiouré in her turn.

643 If the first-born is a boy, the naba may bring him to his
644 court as soon as he reaches the age of discretion to make him either
858 a sogoné or a samand'biga, and the child's father cannot make the
357 slightest objection.

This does not imply that under Mossi law the sogoné and samand'kamba must be children of the pogsiouré. As absolute master of all his subjects, the naba can recruit his servitors throughout his domain as he needs them, with no opposition by the Mossi to this recruitment.

644 The fate of the daughters of the pogsiouré. The girls are
858 taken from their relatives as soon as they are old enough to work
562 and are entrusted by the naba to his own wives.

The latter, for all practical purposes, become the adoptive mothers of these children and, as such, see to their food and clothing. This does not prevent the real mother from bringing cowries and clothing to her daughter, and to make sure that the child will be well treated by the napagha (wife of the naba), she sometimes [431] even brings the latter a gift of kalgo (soumbala) or karite butter (kamé).

When the girls reach puberty, the naba chooses the most at- [584] tractive for his fiancées, and the [167] others are given to some of his administrators or to his own relatives.

562 593 644 Rights of parents over their daughters. Although, as has already been noted, the parents retain the right to help their daughters in small ways, they may not, under any circumstances or pretext, break off their engagement nor prevent their marriage. Still less can they promise the daughter to a third party or expect any sort of gifts from the naba.

Later on, in the event that there is agreement between the parties, the husbands may give trifling presents to their in-laws, but there is neither obligation nor coercion to do so.

562 858 Exceptions. Girls given to the marabouts by the naba are considered a kind of alms (saraka), and any children born of such unions belong to the true fathers and may not be disposed of by the chief.

644 357 858 Disposition of boys. Boys recruited as sogoné or samand'kamba are required to serve the naba faithfully, but they continue to belong to their real relatives from whom they annually receive cowries and particularly the fougoibga (blanket).

644 357 661 Although the sogoné are regularly fed and clothed by the naba -- because [168] a naba must always be surrounded by many pages -- this is not done for the samand'kamba. In many cantons and especially in Ouagadougou at the emperor's court, they receive only a meager pittance every two, three, four, or seven days since their role as "vagabond" or groom is supposed to provide them with ample opportunities to rob or rather to pillage the natives. During the winter the grooms and other samand'kamba go out into fields of maize and millet at night or in the morning, and there is general looting. As for any fowl lingering in the karaga (fields of millet near the huts), they are killed and hidden in the bundles of hay used to feed the horses. There are exceptions to this rule: some ministers of the emperor and canton chiefs give their samand'kamba at least one meal per day -- at night -- and during the winter, because they are doing field work, they are given cooked beans or sagbo (millet cakes) at noon.

644 357 608 In general way, however, it may be said that this type of servitor is not supported by the naba. Like the sogoné, the samand'biga chooses a mother at the court of the naba. He helps her cultivate her plot and performs other small services for her (weaving her clothes,

644 357 608 for example), and in return the adoptive mother gives him a bit of food, over and above his regular ration.

644 357 [169] In view of these circumstances, those who are not required at the home of the naba to care for the horses or for some special service spend half the year with their relatives.

644 357 565 It is perhaps of interest to point out that the samand'kamba are mostly sons of the chiefs of villages of nabissi (sons of naba), sons of nakomsé (descendants of naba and nabissi), and sometimes even sons of canton chiefs at the court of the Mogho Naba. There is also the child of the ordinary Moaga, who was not made a sogoné because he was not thought worthy of the position. The rigorous discipline required of the former young men teaches them "to suffer in order to be able to command."

644 357 Anticipation of freedom. If the sogoné or samand'biga is the eldest son and is old enough to marry at the time of his father's death, the naba is required to free him, even though the period of obligatory service has not been completed.

643 844 584 Another custom, the zan-boko. There is another curious custom among the Mossi. If during the course of his journeys the naba stops in a village and during his stay a girl is born to a local Mossi woman, the child is his, with full rights, if he has been told of the birth.

However, the naba often knows nothing about the event, and the father takes care not to speak of it and then makes whatever disposition of the child he wishes.

844 584 [170] This custom, however, is practiced to its fullest extent between Mossi. A Moaga sana (stranger) passing through the village is invited by the elders to dig the zan-boko (hole in which the placenta must be buried). This is his zounogo, "opportunity." He gives a few cowries (100 to 200) to the head of the family and becomes the fiancé of the baby girl. Later on, when she reaches puberty, the man will make the customary gifts to the parents, and nothing will stand in the way of the marriage.

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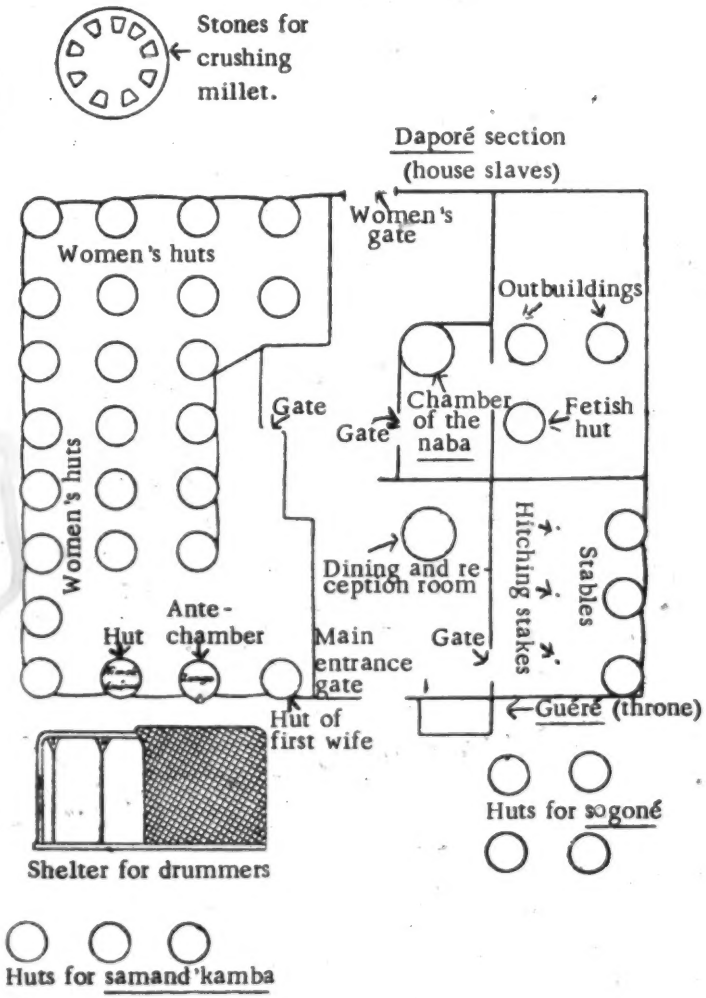


Dwelling of the Naba.

643 imposes a heavy obligation on the chief. He is expected to in-
241 vite the emperor's principal bodyguards (samand'kamba) -- and there are many of them -- to a meal. He is also required to furnish a basket of millet for sowing the field of the Mogho Naba when the first rains come.

652 Utilization of the produce of the emperor's fields. As noted
644 in an earlier chapter [255] under Labor required of Mossi subjects by their naba," the Mogho Naba does not use the millet from his own field. The produce is used to feed the horses, to support the pages and samand'kamba, and especially to make beer on the festive days known as the tinsé and basgha of the king.

[256] Chapter 17

Inheritance and Rights of Succession among the Mossi

428 We have dealt with the question of inheritance at considerable length in the chapter on "Customs and Enthronement of Mossi Chiefs." We return to the subject because it seems necessary to clarify certain details of this question which is so important from the legal point of view.

The opening of succession. The succession is open upon the death of an individual, but property is not passed until after the funeral ceremonies (for all that concerns funerals, see the section on "Death").

Why is there a delay in taking possession of the property? As we have seen above in many chapters, the Moaga is superstitious. An old belief has it that to take possession of the property of the deceased before the funeral is celebrated will bring certain death to the heir or will cause some calamity for the whole family.

Further, since all the members of the family must be assembled for the funeral observances, the inheritance is well publicized, and [257] no one can later claim to have been defrauded.

Requirements for succession. In order to inherit, the following requirements must be met.

1. To be born before the succession is opened.

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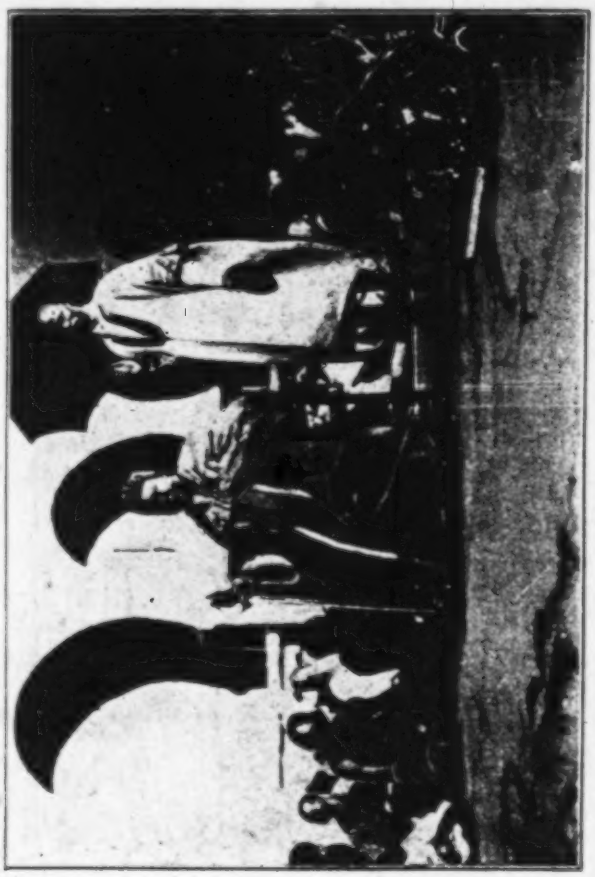

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Mogho Naba
The Ruler of all the Mossi and a Servitor.

From the Mission of the White Fathers
at Ouagadougou.

1: Delobsom--151 I-5 (no date) 1933 FA28 Mossi FA28

631 The canton chiefs consult the oldest men in the village where they reside, and the village chiefs make no decisions bearing on the community without assembling the elders and listening to their advice.

Everything is carried out through the channels of the hierarchy. A province chief never transmits an order directly to a village ruled by a canton chief, but he advises the latter who notifies the village chief, and the village chief in turn calls the elders together, conveys the orders to them, and through them informs all his subjects. The orders passed down in this formal way are always carried out, but if perchance a canton chief should wish to disobey his province chief, he would be seconded by his people who recognize his authority before any other.

643 645 701 The last Moro Nabas had become to some extent idle kings. The protocol to which they were subjected by custom constantly encumbered them, not unlike European court etiquette. The Moro Naba was surrounded with a veritable court. As mentioned above, his High Council was composed of five chief ministers. To these should be added the Iman who represents the Moslems and who wields a certain influence, and the Teng'Soba. /Tr. Among the Mossi there is both a Teng'Soba, earth priest, and a Tan'Soba, war minister. It would seem that the latter is meant here./ The duties of the latter are quite specialized. He does not live in the same village as the Moro Naba, and he rules a canton. In case of war, he is consulted on the timeliness of the hostilities and on their chances of success. It devolves upon him at this time to make the proper sacrifices and to question the ancestral spirits. When war has been decided on, he takes command of the armies, and everyone, the ministers and the canton chiefs, must obey him. The Moro Naba remains in Ouagadougou.

644 839 A crowd of subalterns gravitate around these high dignitaries. The eunuchs are not very respectable people; sometimes habitual thieves were made eunuchs, as were, in general, those pages guilty of too much familiarity with the naba's wives. Some of them could reach a high position. The Kamisoro were always eunuchs, and several important cantons were set aside for them.

644 The pages are young boys, hand-picked from the country's most gifted children. They must serve the naba, and they bear the name soroné. The naba is never alone; he always has one or several pages by his side. One holds the fan, one stands near the monarch to help him shift his position, another takes care of his shoes, yet another of his scepter; the great cup-bearer constantly holds a gourd filled with strong millet beer and covered by a tray of artistically woven basketry.

644 [301] The arms of the sorone are ornamented with two, three, or four copper bracelets, often of alternate yellow and red metal. Sometimes they wear them at the wrists and above the elbow, and occasionally both ankles are adorned with thick bracelets or even with copper gaiters which make walking quite difficult but which are prized very highly.

[201] All these pages wait on the monarch hand and foot. If he coughs, they all rub the palms of their hands together and snap their fingers. This is repeated /18/ even when he drinks, sneezes, or spits. If he rises, the whole court rises, and when he feels those needs common to all mortals, the whole court follows and squats as he does.

644 533 534 On important feast days, the naba is followed by music, and every time he makes a gesture, says a word, or takes a step, the musicians play on various kinds of drums. The typical drum peculiar to Mossi country, bindre, which only the members of the drummers' guild are allowed to play, is made of a gourd which may reach 70 or 80 centimeters in diameter. The calabash is emptied, and the side where the stem was attached is removed and replaced with a tightly stretched goat skin. By hitting this skin with his hands, the artist draws many different sounds from his instrument. It is quite an art to play this drum well, and the members of the guild are trained to it from childhood. They are the troubadours, the griot of the country; they sing the praises of chiefs whose genealogies they know by heart, they frequent the markets, they follow the rich and proclaim them to be the bravest, the most generous, the most handsome men this world has ever known, for the sake of a few gifts. They attend all festivities.

533 534 Another instrument is the lounga, made of a hollowed piece of wood shaped like an hourglass; the two ends are rather broad and joined by a narrow cylinder. This drum is carried under the arm, and its two openings are closed with goat skins joined by cords. The artist stretches these cords more or less tightly by clasping the drum between his arm and the left side of his body, while he hits one of the skins with a small curved stick ending in a little ball and held in his right hand.

The naba's orchestra also includes flutes, from which the natives, especially the Peul, draw pretty but monotonous sounds, and small one-string violins which give forth pleasing tones under a skillful bow.

644 492 If the Moro Naba is to ride on horseback, the grooms bring his mount magnificently decked out in a copper headstall and a large embroidered rug which covers its back and rump completely. A piece of embroidered cloth hides the horse's chest, and the Arab-type saddle,

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Above: The Moro Naba. Behind him, his brother, about twelve years old and the head of a large province, flanked by two pages.

Below: The Bullom Naba and his Pages. Behind him, his two Christian sons.

644 with its tall copper stirrups, bears on either side a larger copper tray.
[492] The drums are played when the naba leaves his dwelling, shift to a different tune when he places his foot in the stirrup, and shift once more when he sets out on his way. The whole population over a radius of several kilometers is thus apprised of the Moro Naba's every gesture. A page precedes him bearing his pillow, and another carrying his scepter. The ministers present at the court and the foreign chiefs present at the capital hasten to mount their horses. Several of the Moro Naba's bodyguards accompany him: ' four strapping fellows walk by his side, their arms leaning against the horse's rump as though to prevent the monarch from falling, while horsemen armed with spears do a fantasia, running 100 meters ahead of the naba, brandishing their spears, returning at full gallop, and setting off again. This constant coming and going entertains the naba who does not gallop.

631 /19/ Every province and canton chief has his court, his ministers,
644 his pages, his drummers. Eunuchs, however, are solely the prerogative of the Moro Naba. In order to qualify for pages, pillow, and spurs, a chief must be invested properly. The present naba of Koupéla who failed to follow the traditions possesses none of these privileges.

The investiture of nabas follows a complex tradition. Each naba invests his own vassals in office. The Moro Naba invests the province chiefs, except for those who hold the title dimma; the province chiefs invest the canton chiefs, and the latter invest the chiefs of villages within their jurisdiction. The right of nomination is an important source of revenue for the nabas.

622 Upon the death of a village chief, several candidates vie for power.
431 They all go to the naba who rules over them, to greet him and to offer him numerous gifts, cowries, chickens, sheep, and, if they are sufficiently wealthy, salt bars, a horse, sometimes even a wife. The one who gives the most has the best chance of being chosen, and the naba decides to announce his choice only when he feels that the candidates are running out of gifts.

622 In Koupéla, a village chief under the direct jurisdiction of the province chief is nominated in the following way. The candidates must apply to the minister who has control over their village. He is the indispensable intermediary between them and the naba who is to make the choice, he is their guide, their sor'soba. When the nomination draws near, the minister goes at night to see the naba, and together they agree on the choice to be made. They may appoint

174 Yemen. But the indication that this country is presently inhabited by the Songhay /sic/ certainly points to Djerma or Zaberma, slightly east of the Niger River in the Say and Dosso region. By dissociating the Moslem legend (undoubtedly created by some Yarse Moslem of the Mossi) from the rest of the tale, one still comes back to the temporary and distant occupation of Djerma by the ancestors of the Mossi.

174 114 Delafosse, on the other hand, contrary to Dr. Ruelle, Captain Lambert, and Lieutenant Marc, although, like the others, he has the Mossi come from Dagomba to their present habitat (see Haut-Sénégal-Niger /Upper Senegal and Niger/, Vol. I, pp. 305-310), seems disinclined to accept the idea of an eastern origin. He says (page 310, in a note), "Lieutenant Marc seems to want to attribute an eastern 174 171 origin to the Mossi. To strengthen his hypothesis, he says that the organization of the court of the Morho nâba (emperors of the Mossi) ●644 is unique in western Africa, while there are /11/ equivalents in 114 Haoussa, Bornu, etc. I should like to point out that this argument is of little value, precisely because, contrary to Lieutenant Marc's theory, one finds in all ancient states of western Africa (Ghana, Mali, Tekrour, Gao, Dahomey, Benin, etc.) an organization absolutely analogous to that of the Mossi court (see part IV of this work and compare with the reports of Arab geographers and early European travelers)." Of course I agree with Delafosse in not finding Lieutenant 174 114 Marc's argument very penetrating (1), but Ruelle, Lambert, and

1. Here is the argument as developed by Lieutenant Marc (op. cit., p. 134, 135):

"The feudal organization of the Mossi country, the court of the Moro-Naba, its pages, and its eunuchs, are all unique in western Africa. On the other hand, the black monarchs, as they are known in central Africa, seem to live in a setting that greatly resembles the one in which the Moro-Naba lives. The sultans of Zinder, Bornu, and Wadai have also a court, eunuchs, and pages. The little we know about the organization of their empires seems rather similar to what we have seen among the Mossi. But our

5: Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1959
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composed of two major groups of communities," Fortes goes on to describe this pattern succinctly:

> On the one side are those that claim to be descendants of immigrants from parts of the country other than their present habitats. On the other side are communities that claim to be the autochthonous inhabitants. . . . Many of the immigrant communities claim descent from forbears of the Mampuru ruling stock. Though now wholly amalgamated with the alleged aboriginal inhabitants, they have certain ritual observances and a system of chieftainship similar to those of the Mamprusi. . . . The institution distinctive of the autochthonous communities is the office of "Custodian of the Earth." This ritual office, involving priestly functions in connection with the cult of the Earth, is found among many West African peoples from the Senegal to the mouth of the Niger. In the Voltaic region it is the exclusive prerogative of the autochthonous communities.[2]

The inhabitants of the Yatenga at the time of the arrival of the Mossi were the Kurumankobe, or Fulse, as they are called by the Mossi. Their descendants recognize their indigenous origin but have become almost wholly acculturated to the Mossi. While most Mossi bear the sib name Wedraogo and maintain political control in the Yatenga, the descendants of the Kurumankobe usually have the sib name Savadogo and are excluded from the exercise of political authority. They have retained the custodianship of the earth, and the elders of their lineages and sibs are the Mossi's *Tenga Soba namba*, their "earth custodians," charged with propitiating the supernatural forces of nature.

### POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

The present king of the Yatenga, the *Yatenga Naba*, is a lineal descendant of the first ruler, Naba Yadiga. The members of the lineage of the king are called "those who maintain themselves upon us" (*riim namba*). Directly subordinate to the authority of the Yatenga Naba are his four grand ministers, each of whom has authority over a particular province (*solum*) of the Yatenga.[3]

The province over which each of the grand ministers presides as lord is divided up into a number of cantons (*tense*), each of which is ruled by a chief who is the central political authority both of the village in which he resides and of the villages within the canton. Like the province, the concept of the canton is not precisely territorial. Some villages may owe

[2] Meyer Fortes, *The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi* (London: Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 6.

[3] These provinces refer not only to geographical areas of the kingdom but to particular categories of the population. For example, the *Balum Naba* has direct authority over the southern regions of the Yatenga and indirect authority over the cantons of Riziam and Zittenga, political entities which have never fully recognized the central authority of the *Yatenga Naba*. This same minister is also especially charged with maintaining liaison with certain of the more important earth custodians throughout the Yatenga.

428 As for the soukala itself, he keeps it. He leaves his own
593 soukala, along with everything he owns, to come and live in the soukala of the deceased. In order to put the soukala he is leaving to some use, however, he sends one of his unmarried brothers (that is to say, one who lived up to that time with the deceased) to settle there. He immediately gives this brother one of his father's wives, one of the wives in the estate, and sends him, thus married, to settle in the soukala he is leaving.

593 I asked my informant why the father does not keep his oldest
578 married son with him instead of having him build a new soukala on the outside, since the son returns to the paternal soukala anyway when the father dies. The Mossi chief I was questioning replied that if the father kept his oldest son by his side, the latter, when married and growing older, would wish for his father's death in order to become independent. Wishing for his father's death, he might be tempted to bring it about. If settled in his own soukala, on the other hand, the head of a household and independent, he would nurture no ill thoughts against his father.

593 We shall see later that this feeling of fear and suspicion toward
578 the eldest son is carried to an extreme among the Moro Nabas. This
644 is understandable, since kingship is inherited. Once married, therefore, the eldest son of the prince went far from his father, to a soukala of his own and remained there until the Moro Naba's death.

428 As for the father's fields, the eldest son keeps them all if he is
593 able to work them all. If he is not able to do so, he gives the surplus over and above what he can work to his brothers.

As far as livestock is concerned, the eldest son gives some to his younger brothers and even to his sisters.

The same applies to slaves and cowries.

428 As for wives, if there are many, he gives some to his younger
593 brothers. Thus, for example, if there are ten wives and he has two
581 brothers, he gives two wives to each /551/ brother and keeps six for himself (let us add that the deceased, before dying, often gives a wife to his younger brother or brothers).

428 To summarize, the eldest son gets the soukala and the fields.
593 As for movable property, he takes about 50 percent and leaves the other half to the younger sons and to the daughters. There is a sharing, therefore, although a very uneven one.

645 1. The Kamsoro Naba, chief of the eunuchs and prime minister, a sort of minister of the interior.

2. The Ouidi Naba, chief of the cavalry.

3. The Gounga Naba, chief of the infantry.

4. The Laralé Naba, guardian of the tombs of the Moro Nabas.

5. The Baloum Naba, major-domo and chief of the soroné (pages). He might be said to rule over the interior of the palace.

645 635 Those five ministers ruled over the five Mossi provinces that were administered directly: Kamsoro, Ouidi, Gounga, Laralé, and Baloum. As we can see, those provinces had no proper names, no names of their own, and each took the name of the dignitary who governed it. Thus, they were not true geographical or ethnic provinces, but artificial districts lifted out of an area that was both too extensively parceled out and too homogeneous to yield spontaneously anything but villages and cantons.

644 In addition to those five ministers, among which the Kamsoro Naba and Baloum Naba seem to have been the most important, there were other dignitaries and servitors, as follows: /569/

1. The Tamsaba or Kinsaba, high chief of the bodyguards.
2. The Samandé Naba, chief of the bodyguards.
3. The Pouy Naba, chief of the fetisheers.
4. The Gandé Naba, high priest and sacrificer.
5. The Dapouy Naba, chief of the servitors.
6. The Kambo Naba, subchief of the servitors.
7. The Bindé Naba, chief of the Moro Naba's drummers.
8. The Ouidianga Naba, chief of the grooms.
9. The Mendo Naba, chief or representative of the butchers.
10. The Dara Haba, chief of the markets.
11. The Kamboué Naba, executioner.
12. Finally, the Yarsé Naba, chief or representative of the Yarsé settled among the Mossi. The prestige he enjoyed actually ranked him immediately beneath the five ministers and the Tamsaba.

[594] "The various functions at the court of the Moro Naba," says Moulins, "are hereditary in the sense that their holders are always chosen by the sovereign among close relatives of the previous occupant in office.

644 "In addition to these dignitaries, the Moro Naba is surrounded with a veritable army of soronê (pages), samandê (bodyguards), ourkima (grooms), and jussaba (eunuchs)."

Some explanations are in order concerning the soronê. They are young boys or adolescents, from seven or eight to fifteen years old, who are to be found not only around the Moro Naba but around all Mossi chiefs, no matter who they may be, ministers, dignitaries, canton chiefs, and even village chiefs. These chiefs obtain them, as we saw earlier, by claiming the first-born son as well as the first-born daughter of all the men to whom they give a wife. The boy is made into a soronê, and the girl used to perpetuate the recruitment of soronê and servitors by giving her in marriage to one of them.

644 838 834 The soronê wear their hair like women. Like them, they wear heavy copper bracelets at the wrists and ankles, and if rumor is to be credited, they not only /570/ bear the attributes of women but also substitute for them occasionally. It seems that the Mossi must not have carnal relations with their wives on Friday. This is a religious ordinance meant to ingratiate the divinities, but it overlooked the soronê.... In any case this corruption does not reach the common masses of the Mossi, who do not have the means to employ soronê. Thus it applies only to chiefs.

644 No matter what the case may be, the soronê are usually selected among the most attractive boys, and some of them have great beauty with their woman's hairdo.

Another duty of their position is to remain virgins... as far as women are concerned.

644 789 684 "Every year," says Moulins, "the chastity of the Moro Naba's soronê is put to a test. They are requested by the Pouy Naba to cast their reflection into a gourd full of water, and according to the manner in which the reflection is cast, they are proclaimed free from stain or convicted of carnal relations, in which case, prior to our occupation, they were put to death without further delay. This is because the soronê, as confidants of the Naba, are often entrusted with state secrets and could only maintain the discretion required by their position if they were to avoid the entreaties of love.

644 "When the soronê reach manhood, the Naba gives them a wife and sends them away. The first child born of the union between a soronê and the wife given him by the Naba devolves to the latter,

644 who will make him into a soroné if he is a boy, or alone have the right to give her in marriage if she is a girl."

643 Moulins also provides interesting details on the manner in which the Moro Naba spends his days, or rather spent them in the past, for this description refers to the state of affairs prior to the French occupation.

"From Ouarga's reign onward, the Moro Nabas, who had previously resided successively in various parts of the empire, settled at Ouagadougou where they have lived ever since. Custom constrains them never to leave /571/ the capital except in unusually serious circumstances. This is because the land falls into anarchy [674 when the sovereign is absent from Ouagadougou. All theft, pillage, 696] and murder committed at that time remain unprosecuted.

644 "Every morning at seven, the Moro Naba emerges from his hut. 173 His saddled horse waits before the door. He mounts it and pretends to set out on his way, but after riding around his hut he dismounts and goes back into his hut only to come out again immediately.

"This formality of the protocol has the following origin. A long time ago the favorite wife of the Moro Naba having fled to La, the sovereign wished to go and fetch her himself. He mounted his horse and was about to leave when all the court dignitaries rushed to him, admonishing him not to carry out his project, for his absence from Ouagadougou could only result in anarchy. The monarch gave way, and soon afterwards his wife returned of her own accord. It is in memory of the magnanimity of this sovereign, who sacrificed himself in the interests of his people, that every morning since that time the Moro Naba has pretended to prepare for departure and to then give up his plan.

644 "Following this ceremony, the Moro Naba settles himself in a recess sunk into the wall that surrounds his residence, and then, to the strains of abundant music, the whole court comes to the sovereign and prostrates itself before him, brow in the dust, forearms striking the ground in rhythm with a great clicking of bracelets. Then business is attended to.

"First, the five province chiefs come forward in order of precedence, relate to the Moro Naba those events which have taken place since the preceding day, and receive his instructions for the day. Then they present to him the canton and village chiefs and the common natives who wish for an audience.

644 "The Moro Naba, assisted by his ministers and with the help of frequent libations of dolo, listens to the requests which are made /572/ to him and passes sentence on the trials which are referred to him.

"Around eleven o'clock he withdraws into his hut and rests until three o'clock, at which time he comes and seats himself on his throne again.

"The Moro Naba's every gesture is prescribed by a minute protocol and accompanied by flute and drum music and finger snappings by his entourage.

"Is he riding out for a short stroll around Ouagadougou? The whole court follows him, either on foot or on horseback. His griot make the air re-echo with their shouts, to the accompaniment of drums and flutes. A groom leads his horse by the rein, while two soronê hold his stirrups and a third one, on horseback by his side, shelters him with a huge umbrella. Other pages follow carrying his pillow, his sword, and canari of dolo from which the sovereign draws frequent and abundant libations along the way.

"At night the Moro Naba, in disguise and accompanied by a single soronê, wanders incognito through the various village quarters in order to find out what is going on without being recognized.

[782] "On certain set dates, he goes to localities named Sabaye and Saraboutenga, not far from Ouagadougou, where he sacrifices beeves, sheep, and chickens.

444 595 "The Moro Naba has very numerous wives. In addition to those he marries himself, there are those of his predecessor and all those that devolve to him in the course of his reign, among them, in certain cases, the adulterous wives of his subjects.

644 595 684 "The sovereign's wives do not all live with him. They are settled in villages ruled by eunuchs and near which no one could come, on pain of death, prior to our occupation. Every year the faithfulness of the Moro Naba's wives is checked by submitting them to the same test as the soronê. Adultery is punished by death for the wife as well as her partner. It even seems that adultery with one of the sovereign's wives is regarded /573/ as the least pardonable crime a man can commit. In fact, the nakomsé or sons of chiefs are liable to the death penalty only in this case.

664 554 "The wives of the Moro Haba never give birth or raise their children at his own place of residence, but only in one of the eunuch villages. In theory they do not stand above the wives of common natives, but in practice they enjoy high consideration among the Mossi, like all that is connected with the Moro Naba.

"The sons of the sovereign, once weaned, are entrusted to a province or canton chief who is put in charge of their education. [582] At the age of ten they are married and settled in a village, where they live, surrounded by a court, but without necessarily being given a territorial command.

"The prerogatives attached to the title of Moro Naba's son are vast as long as the monarch is alive. They grant the right to steal, to loot, and even to kill with impunity.

"Upon the death of the Moro Naba, his sons become mere nakomsé (sons of chiefs) whose position nevertheless remains quite privileged.

643 644 554 "One of the sons of the deceased sovereign, however, is granted special privileges. At the death of the Moro Naba, the latter's wives elect one of his young sons who adopts his name and, so to speak, perpetuates him. He has no /territorial/ command, but he is surrounded by a court similar to that of the Moro Naba, he enjoys respect almost equal to that paid to the latter, and he is a sacred figure. No one has the right to contradict him or to harm him.

644 554 "As for the Moro Naba's daughters, although in principle they do not stand above ordinary Mossi girls, in practice they are treated with the strictest respect by all natives. Once married, they have almost complete freedom of action vis-à-vis their husband, and they often take advantage of this to lead a most unruly existence.

643 766 "When the Moro Naba's death has been verified, his burial is carried out and followed by the funeral ceremonies, which are held in the same fashion as for a common native, with the sole difference /574/ that they have more brilliance and that the sacrifices are more sizable.

642 672 "For the whole duration of the interregnum, the land falls into a state of complete anarchy. Everyone has the right to kill, loot, and steal as he pleases. Convicts who are serving sentence are fully pardoned and set free.

567 whenever the master had work to give him. He worked for himself the rest of the time, that is to say, one day out of three during the cultivation period and throughout the dry season when he was not "on duty."

He was fed by the master when he worked for him. When he worked for himself, he procured his own food.

The bingo provided his own clothing, except when he was absolutely incapable of doing so. Then he appealed to his master.

The bingo's daughters were given in marriage by the master, who took them for himself or gave them to his sons, to his brothers, etc. In return, the bingo's sons had to be provided with wives by their master and not by their father. In any case, they worked for him, like their father, and could no more be sold than he could, unless they betrayed the master with his wives.

567 The bingo could own property since he had time to work for him-
428 self. At his death, his inheritance went not to his master but to his oldest son (unless he had an enslaved brother nearby, but I am considering the case of a former yembraogo, bought by the master, given a wife by him, and thus becoming a bingo, and then having children). At the death of his eldest son /266/ the inheritance went to his younger brother, etc. The master came into the inheritance only when there were no heirs.

567 On the other hand, the master could request from his slave whatever he wished, a chicken, a goat, a beef. The slave could not refuse, since everything belonged to the master on principle, the slave being his also.

The bingo could never free himself or be freed by his master. The number of generations which had elapsed made no difference.

The bingo could belong to the head of a family, the head of a compound, the head of a work group, or to a mere household head. They were owned on an individual basis. When a man who owned a bingo or yembraogo owed labor to another man, for example, to the head of his work group, the bingo or yembraogo likewise owed labor to this man and went to work with his master.

567 It must be noted that the bingo of the Moro Naba, that is, the
644 "Crown bingo," were in a special position from every point of view. As we shall see later under "Public Administration" /not translated/, they came under the authority of the Rassam Naba or Rassoum Naba, one of the four ministers, who was sometimes called Bingo Naba for

567 this reason. They did not work for the Moro Naba except seven or
●644 eight days a year when they were called along with all the other inhabitants of Ouahigouya, without exception, to the Moro Naba's fields. Actually, they were thus free men as far as work was concerned. Half their daughters, however, reverted to the Moro Naba, who took them for himself or for his close relatives. On the other hand, they supported themselves completely (food, clothing, etc.). The Moro Naba gave them no assistance whatever in this respect.

Let us add that the ordinary captives, the bingo of the common Mossi, found a safe retreat at the court of the Moro Naba. If a slave was dissatisfied with his master, he would run away and take asylum with the chief of Yatenga. The latter handed him to the Rassam Naba, who saw to it that a hut and a field were given to him (if he was married) and a wife as well (if he did not have any). As long as he was not married, he would cultivate the fields of the Moro Naba's wives, who provided him with food in return. Once married, he would work the soil, labor for himself and his wife, and have no obligations other than the general duties of the bingo who belonged to the Moro Naba, as we have seen above. In short, he would acquire the general status of a Crown slave.

Let us add, however, that if the master came and claimed his slave from the Moro Naba, the captive was sometimes returned. This depended on the fairness of the master's case (he had never mistreated his slave, had always been good to him, etc.) and also on the more or less sizable gift which he presented to the Moro Naba in order to gain his good graces.

The bingo of the Riziam Naba, an independent king as we have already noted /not translated/, were in the same position as the bingo of the Moro Naba and not in the position of ordinary bingo. The same applied to the bingo of the three great chiefs /267/ of the canton, the Zitenga Naba, Ratenga Naba, and Roussoum Naba.

566 6. Serfs. In Yatenga, there were serfs of a sort, the bagaré, to use the Mossi term. The only ones who had them, however, were the Moro Naba of Yatenga, the Moro Naba of Riziam, and a few great canton chiefs, such as the Zitenga Naba and the Ratenga Naba. Not even the Moro Naba's ministers were entitled to own them, much less the common Mossi. The bagaré was a Peul slave, a dimadio (rimaïbé in the plural) who had been captured from the Peul or who had fled from them to the Mossi, in short, a former rimaïbé who had

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the name of the current ruler. When Crozat asked one of his Mossi bearers why Boukary Koutou had chosen a title that means "elephant," the man declared, "He is an elephant; he is king of all kings as the elephant is king of all animals; a great elephant-king he is."[2] Another Moaga, meeting Crozat on the road to Ouagadougou, told him to be prepared to meet a monarch "whose riches are inexhaustible and whose splendor is marvelous. He and his family wear only the most admirable European clothes; a thousand horses stand before his door, and there are more than a thousand women in his house. He is served by one hundred eunuchs; he commands as master 333 chiefs; and when he speaks to them it is as though God himself had spoken; everyone bows down before him and obeys."[3] Crozat, looking at the Mogho Naba through European eyes, did not find the "great king" he had expected. Yet he and later European visitors to the Mossi capital did affirm that all Mossi officials and district chiefs prostrated themselves in obeisance to their sovereign, even if they did not subsequently follow his instructions.[4]

Many rituals associated with the person and court of the Mogho Naba served to emphasize the high esteem in which he was held by his subjects. For example, the sovereign showed himself every morning at a ceremony called "Ouend pous yan" (literally, "God rises," or "the sun rises") that survives to this day. The name of this ceremony has led many scholars and travelers to assert that traditionally the Mogho Naba was considered a divine king. Dim Delobson states that this ceremony "shows the regard which the Mossi have for their chief, since they compare him to the sun, and thus to a 'god.' "[5] However, the Mossi do not now and probably never did regard their monarchs either as gods or as divine kings. There is a great deal of difference between regarding a man as "powerful and brilliant" like the sun and regarding him as divine. As a matter of fact, the Mossi very often dramatize in humorous fashion the all-too-human frailties of their rulers, without ever considering it sacrilegious to do so. On the other hand, the Mogho Naba, as the supreme ruler, was expected to follow faithfully the strict etiquette demanded by his exalted position.

The morning ceremony was opened by the ruler's chief page, the *soghone-kasanga,* who sprinkled a phylacteric solution around a throne (*guere*) in the courtyard in front of a reception room called the *zongo.* Other pages (*soghondamba*) brought out a large cushion (*naghpure*), the ruler's sword, and other personal accouterments, and placed them on the throne. Still other pages aided the Mogho Naba in his toilet. He was clothed in a large red robe, which symbolized the rising sun; he wore a bonnet surmounted by silver streamers (*wazourfou sebere*), which represented the sun itself.

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sented the sun itself. The toilet was performed in complete silence, for no one was allowed to speak to the monarch until after the ceremony. Meanwhile, in the courtyard, the court dignitaries, visitors, and the musicians and minstrels (*bendere*) took their places. The provincial ministers sat on their respective stones (*coganaramse*), and the visitors sat by their hosts. The pages at the door of the zongo awaited the moment when the Mogho Naba and his escort would emerge from the zongo. On seeing the two pages who preceded the monarch, they snapped their fingers as a signal to the still silent bendere.

On seeing the monarch, the chief musician, the Bendere Naba, rubbed his fingers across the top of his drum to produce the sound of a lion's growl, and the other drummers and violinists played the royal air, "Ouend pous yan." The head guard, the Kàmbo Naba, and his men, carrying guns, walked up from the side and knelt down facing the assembly. And the *samande-kamba*, the "servants of the courtyard," came with heavy batons to guard against crimes of lese majesty. From the wings came a groom with a partly saddled ceremonial horse. As soon as the monarch was seated on his throne, his two pages moved to the front and knelt down facing the courtyard. The salutations now began. The first group of ministers, led by the Baloum Naba and including the Samande Naba, the Samande Nabila, the Ouedrange Naba, the Kamsaogho Naba, and the Zusoaba Kasanga, left their stones and came to the throne with slow steps and bowed heads. A few yards from the monarch, they knelt on the ground, and with their fingers folded and their thumbs in the air, leaned forward, struck the ground with both hands three times, and then rubbed the palms of their left hands with the fingers of their right. Then they arose, and with heads still bowed walked backwards to their places.[6] With the music still playing, another group of ministers, led by the Ouidi Naba and including such men as the Gounga Naba, the Larhalle Naba, and the Pwe Naba, saluted the ruler in the same manner. On Fridays and other Islamic holy days, the Moslem Imam representing the Ouagadougou congregation read aloud from the Koran. This part of the ceremony ended when the Mogho Naba rose, and, with the measured steps and swaying gait that signified royalty, retired to the zongo, preceded by his two pages.[7]

A few minutes later, the monarch returned to the courtyard without his red robe and glittering headdress. There was a second round of salutations comparable to the first, but this time the Ouidi Naba and his group did not appear unless it was an important occasion or important guests were present. When this part of the ceremony was over, the monarch called for his half-saddled horse and announced that he wished to go to

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643 La, a village near Koudougou district. His eldest wife, the *Pughtiema,*
796 appeared carrying her household utensils in order to accompany her husband. However, all the ministers, led by the Kamsaogho Naba, implored the monarch to have his horse unsaddled and to postpone the trip until the following day. Feigning anger, the Mogho Naba reluctantly agreed to remain in the capital, ordered his horse unsaddled, dismissed his wife, and re-entered the palace.[8]

173 The tradition about the origin of this ritual reveals something of the
643 Mossi attitude toward the human frailties of their rulers. It appears that
796 Poko, the favorite wife of Mogho Naba Waraga (ca. 1660–80), asked permission to visit her father at La, and that he refused to grant her request because of his love and admiration for her. Nevertheless, she continued to ask him for permission, and after her third request he granted her wish and sent a page and a small girl with her as chaperons. When Poko did not return to the palace on the third day, Naba Waraga sent two pages to her father's compound to fetch her, and here they discovered that she had died. Fearing the king's wrath toward persons who brought bad tidings, the pages did not report back to him but notified the ministers of Poko's death. When subsequent messengers also failed to return, the king decided to go to La. The following day, after the morning ceremonies, he ordered his horse saddled and commanded the Pughtiema to get ready to accompany him on his journey. But the ministers, anxious to protect him from grief, told him that a great king never followed a mere woman under any circumstances and persuaded him not to depart. The monarch went back into the palace, and the dignitaries ordered the horse unsaddled and sent it away. Shortly afterwards, the king changed his mind and decided to go to La, but he was beseeched not to do so. He swore that he would leave the following morning, and that if he were prevented from doing so, he would advise all his descendants to try to go to La every morning until one of them succeeded.[9]

643 At the end of this ceremony, a page gave the ministers an ample supply
644 of beer and kola nuts. The Moslems were given presents of kola nuts and
692 millet water (*zom kom*) sweetened with honey, since they were forbidden
576 to drink millet beer. Later in the morning, the Mogho Naba left the palace
[431] and entered the zongo, where he greeted his visitors, accepted gifts from visiting chiefs and subjects, dispensed gifts in turn, and presided over the court of justice. Anyone who went to see the ruler had to be accompanied by his provincial minister or his host—regardless of whether it was his purpose to pay a courtesy visit, to pledge allegiance, to plead for aid, or to give
643 testimony in a lawsuit. Pages moved back and forth between the palace
644 and the courtyard, dispensing kola nuts and beer or millet water prepared
576

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by the sovereign's wives. Other pages waited upon the monarch, and accompanied him when he moved about the courtyard. When the ruler drank any liquid, the pages rubbed the palm of one hand with the fingers of the other; when he sneezed, everyone clapped; and when he stepped out to urinate, a page accompanied him, turned his back to him, knelt down, and saluted by rubbing his palm.

When the Mogho Naba had finished his morning audiences, he entered his palace for a solitary meal. This meal was prepared by one of his young wives, who tasted it in his presence before giving it to the page who served him.[10] After eating, the monarch rested for a few hours; then he emerged into the courtyard to grant audiences and hear court cases until sunset. At that time he retired to his palace, and those courtiers who were not connected with the evening ceremonies returned to their homes.

The ceremony that closed the day at the monarch's court was called "Kwaga Basgha" (literally, "final meal"). This ceremony still survives. As soon as the sun began to set, the samande-kamba took their heavy batons and stood guard to prevent unauthorized persons from coming near the *namtibo* (royal amulets). The Baloum Naba and the Bendere Naba entered the palace courtyard and knelt before the zongo. The chief page then brought out the *kwaga*, a pottery vessel containing a fire ritually associated with the namtibo.[11] The vessel was placed on the ground, and the page blew on the fire to make it burn brightly. Meanwhile, the Bendere Naba rubbed his fingers across his drum to make the growl of a lion. When the fire finally died out, the Zusoaba Kasanga and the Baloum Naba closed the ceremony by rising, coming together, and saluting the namtibo in the traditional Mossi manner. (The Mogho Naba did not attend this ceremony.) Before the officials left for the night, the pages gave them pots of beer prepared by the royal wives. Sometimes these officials visited the Mogho Naba before they retired to their compounds. Once these men had departed, the pages served the ruler his evening meal, which again had been prepared by one of his young wives.

During the hours of darkness the Mogho Naba conducted many secret affairs of state and conversed with the members of his household. Persons seeking the nam of a deceased relative were often granted audience at night, as were litigants in court cases. When there were no pressing matters of state, the ruler gathered some of the royal wives around him and discussed family affairs, which protocol forbade him to discuss during the day. Some rulers reportedly disguised themselves and visited the wards of the town in the company of a young man from the palace, in an effort to learn things that did not ordinarily come to a ruler's attention.

The Mogho Naba slept in a grass hut in the palace compound. Two

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643 compound. Two
[342] [754] [775] [644]



reasons are given for the choice of a grass hut over a brick building: first, the grass hut was considered better protection against sorcerers, who were believed to induce storms that destroy buildings and their occupants; second, it was believed that the ruler's ancestors preferred to visit grass huts because it was easier for them to enter through the interstices in the walls. When the monarch retired for the night, one of his pages stood guard at the door. The Mogho Naba usually slept all night, but he occasionally made the rounds with a page to check on the palace guards or the safety (and virtue) of his wives.

643 [644] The routine of the Mogho Naba seldom varied. Only in times of danger or on great ceremonial occasions did protocol permit any major changes in court procedure. Normally, pages, ministers, and other court officials adhered very strictly to their traditional tasks.

The Mossi considered the king's office to be such a difficult one that even today they say, *Mogho Naba tuumde ya yida ʃa* ("The Mogho Naba's task is the most difficult of all"). Nevertheless, the Mogho Naba's office was always eagerly sought, and considerable care had to be exercised to ensure that the right person was chosen. As soon as the incumbent Mogho Naba died, and even before he was buried, the Ouidi Naba, as prime minister, began the consultations leading to the selection of a new monarch. Mossi custom decreed that the eldest son of a previous ruler be chosen as the new Mogho Naba. This choice was not automatic, however, in view of the primary consideration that the person selected should have the skill to "keep" the country. Other qualifications for office were membership in the royal minimal lineage, soundness of body and mind, and sufficient age to command universal respect. Given these requirements and the lack of any provisions for a regency, it is not surprising that a dead ruler's sons, brothers, uncles, and even grandchildren—that is, his entire babissi—should have competed to "eat the nam" (accede to power).[18] Of the thirty-four kings who have ruled since Oubri, the founder of the Ouagadougou dynasty, twelve succeeded their brothers and twenty-two their fathers. Interestingly enough, there is some indication that at the beginning of the Ouagadougou dynasty, the successor of a king was usually chosen from among his brothers before the nam was passed on to the next generation.[19] For example, Oubri's four sons all reigned in turn before the kingship descended to the son of the last brother in office. Then, two of this brother's sons reigned before the nam descended to a new generation. Initially, then, seniority within the royal lineage, like seniority within the local ruling lineages, may have been determined by generation. On the other hand, accidental factors may have governed: a weak state organization may have

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The newly elected monarch secreted himself either at the Samande Nabila's home or elsewhere in the capital until daybreak. Tradition holds that if he were killed before being officially proclaimed before his subjects as the new ruler, the assassin could become Mogho Naba.[19]

The public ceremonies marking the official proclamation of the new ruler's accession to power took place on the following day. Early that morning, the monarch left his secret sleeping quarters and proceeded to the Koumbi Naba's house. Here he dressed in his white garments and mounted an old, unsaddled horse. The Baloum Naba then gave him a sack containing the namtibo, which he placed over his shoulder, and the Kaizi Naba led him out of the courtyard by the women's door. As the ruler's horse passed through the gate, his sister, the *Napoko* ("female ruler"), cried, "The sun has reappeared! The fire is relighted! The earth lives again!" A large crowd of musicians and warriors who had been alerted by the ministers shouted and danced as they accompanied the monarch, who circled the compound three times.[20] The ruler then reentered the compound, and this time he came out through the men's door as a sign of his full status. Here he was greeted by the Ouidi Naba, who proclaimed in a loud voice, "Mossi people, here is the Mogho Naba!" The warriors shouted and fired their muskets, and the musicians played. Then all the dignitaries and their followers solemnly prostrated themselves and paid homage and swore allegiance to their monarch. He, in turn, listened attentively when his ministers and some of the elder chiefs gave him advice about how the affairs of state should be conducted. After each declaration of loyalty or word of counsel, the people shouted in praise of their ruler. The Bendere Naba, accompanied by his musicians, then recited the ruler's genealogy, announced the pledges the new monarch had made to his people, and acclaimed him by his royal title, "Mogho Naba [X]." From this moment on, no child born during his reign could bear the ruler's name, and those persons who already bore it called themselves *Nab'yure* ("king's name").

As the next stage in the ceremony the Mogho Naba, accompanied by his retinue, visited the various wards in the capital. In each he was proclaimed ruler and received the allegiance of both Mossi and non-Mossi ward chiefs. He visited the wards controlled by such men as the Loumbila Naba, the Sapone Naba, and the Ouagadougou Naba, and at each stop the ward chief declared, "People of [X], here is your new sovereign." Having been acknowledged by the leading chiefs of the capital, the new ruler then returned to his host's house. He emerged later in the day to visit the compound of a palace attendant, the Samande Nabila, where he sat under a

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The Mogho Naba had an elaborate court composed of many officials, relatives, and servants. The most important courtiers were the five ministers, who appeared daily at court and took part in all important ceremonies in addition to administering their own provinces. Aside from these men, the Mogho Naba had a number of other officials called Naba whose responsibilities covered the full range of duties in the palace and in the capital. One of the most interesting was the Pwe Naba, a royal diviner and court chaperon. His chief duty was to guard the morals of the pages and the royal wives; he also administered the ordeal to persons accused of treason. The pages were required to be chaste until they were discharged from the palace, lest their amorous adventures lead them to compromise the virtue of the royal wives, with whom they were constantly in contact. A wife and a page suspected of adultery were tested by the Pwe Naba. He forced them to look into a mirror or a calabash of water, and declared them guilty or innocent according to the way their faces were reflected. If they were found guilty, the wife was executed and the page was either executed or discharged in disgrace. The Pwe Naba also saw to it that strangers did not address the ruler's wives either on the street or in the market. Offenders were executed.

The Dapore Naba served as the court's chief executioner and as head of a group of the Mogho Naba's hereditary serfs. Members of the royal clan were executed by strangulation, since royal blood could not be shed; all other persons were executed either with a sword, by hanging, or with heavy clubs. Another palace official was the Ouedrango Naba, the head groom. It was he who saddled and presented the king's ceremonial horse to him at the morning ceremony. The Kambo Naba commanded the palace guard; only he and his guards were permitted to carry guns. The Samande Naba and the Samande Nabila supervised the work of the samande-kamba, young men who worked around the palace courtyard and kept watch with heavy batons to enforce order during ceremonies. A lesser palace official was the Zusoaba Kasanga, who, as chief of the palace eunuchs, ruled over the guardians of the royal harem. The Gande Naba made sacrifices for the ruler and also distributed gifts from the king to the royal officials and the royal household.

Another courtier, and one who played an important role during the installation of the new ruler, was the Ouagadougou Naba. As a direct descendant of the Ninisi, he was all but indispensable at sacrifices propitiating or honoring his ancestors. The Bendere Naba was the chief musician and court historian; according to some reports, a Bendere Naba was killed instantly if he made a mistake while reciting the ruler's genealogy. The Raga Naba was chief of the markets in the capital. Under him were

644 Under him were the Kos Naba, who levied taxes on general merchandise sold in the markets, and the Nemdo Naba, who collected taxes on meat sold in the markets and was responsible for distributing meat within the royal household. Most of these positions were hereditary, but here primogeniture was not as important as in the ruling and administrative lineages.

The various foreign groups in the capital also sent representatives to the court. Among them were the Zangweoto Naba for the Hausa, a Naba for the Songhai, and an Imam for the Ouagadougou Moslems. Even total strangers such as the early European visitors were placed under the care of a special chief.

The most ubiquitous persons at the Mogho Naba's court were the pages, who were boys between the ages of ten and twenty. These boys were regarded as comparable to the ruler's wives, since they served him in the same manner as ordinary Mossi women serve their husbands at home. They wore women's bracelets and women's clothes, and dressed their hair in the same style as the royal wives. As we have seen, they were forbidden sexual intercourse until they were released from the royal household.[22]

173 644 The institution of pages is said to have originated sometime in the seventeenth century, during the reign of Mogho Naba Waraga. Before his reign, the wives of the Mogho Naba attended him at court. The change came during a lengthy civil war between Waraga and the chief of Riziam territory, who had refused to pay allegiance to him. During five "dry seasons" (five years) of fighting, the Mogho Naba was attended only by a small boy. He found him so efficient that at the end of the war he resolved to employ only page boys and prohibit his wives from attending him at court. This origin is conjectural. However, the use of pages effectively segregated the royal wives from court intrigues, and, once instituted, the practice spread throughout the country.

644 The Mogho Naba had little difficulty recruiting pages. Many of them were the sons of pughsiudse whom he had given to his subjects as wives. In theory, the Mogho Naba could select boys at will, but in practice the pages were usually selected by the ministers and sent to the palace. Most boys willingly accepted service, but some, often with the support of their parents, resisted confinement to the palace. Some ten-year-olds even ran away to escape their impending fate, but they were soon caught and braceleted with the insignia of their new status. Once this had been done, their lineages encouraged them to remain at the palace. Their period of service terminated when they began to "push beards," usually at about eighteen years of age. One district chief claims that ancient Mogho Nanamse used to take the sons of district chiefs as pages and release them only when their

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fathers died. In this way the rulers not only retained the allegiance of the boys' fathers but had a unique opportunity to determine whether these boys were qualified to succeed to the nam.

The life of a page was confining, even if sometimes very rewarding. Pages were bound by the demands of the ruler, whose every wish had to be satisfied immediately. A quarrelsome ruler was a terror to his pages, who had to bear silently his insults and blows. On the other hand, a considerate monarch permitted or encouraged his pages to profit from the small political intrigues in which they were invariably involved. Prospective district chiefs "made friends" with pages to find out whether their suits were progressing, or to whom they might usefully offer gifts. The pages used any money they might procure to buy clothes for themselves, to supplement the clothing and presents they received from their relatives. Every page was "adopted" by one of the royal wives, who prepared his meals and took care of him. In return, he helped this woman cultivate her field when his presence was not required by the monarch. When a page completed his service satisfactorily, he received a pughsiudga as a wife. If his work had not been satisfactory, he was simply dismissed.

The only woman who played any significant role at the court of the Mogho Naba was the Pughtiema, his head wife. She was the only wife to whom he presented his friends, and whom he allowed his subjects to visit. This woman, who was commonly the widow of the former Mogho Naba, was often chosen because she was past childbearing age: she was thus older and wiser than the other wives, less preoccupied with children, and above the sexual jealousies that may often develop in polygynous households. She arbitrated among the wives and stood *in loco parentis* to the younger ones, whom she instructed and advised. She served also as official hostess to the ancestors during the annual propitiatory rituals. It was her duty to prepare the millet beer and millet water for the sacrifices to the ancestors, who were believed to feast at her hut before they visited the rest of the household. In addition, it was she who prepared to accompany the Mogho Naba to La each day. Lastly, it was her duty to introduce any new royal wife to the ancestors, and to ask them to watch over this potential mother of their descendants.

The ruler inherited some of his wives from his father; some he received from his many friends and vassals; and others he selected from among his pughsiudse. Crozat reports that Mogho Naba Wobogo (1890-96) allegedly had a hundred wives. Crozat did not see this many women at Wobogo's court, understandably, since most of a ruler's wives lived in villages, where they were guarded by eunuchs.[28] Of the substantial number of royal wives

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595 who did live at the palace, only a small minority prepared the ruler's meals
● 644 and shared his bed. Dim Delobson reports that Mogho Naba Kom II (1905–42) had thirty-seven wives. His son, Mogho Naba Sagha II (1942–
[177] 57), had twenty.[24] The present Mogho Naba, Kougri, recently married
[178] according to Western tradition and is officially monogamous.[25] There seems to be a general trend toward fewer wives among Mossi chiefs.

643 Mossi rulers never married for the purpose of forming state alliances,
581 and their marriages had no political significance. The Mogho Naba's mar-
582 riages were exogamous with regard to the royal lineage and to his mother's minimal lineage. Aside from these restrictions, however, the Mogho Naba could marry women from any Mossi lineage or group, including serfs, slaves, and foreign populations. It is said that when Mogho Naba Sanum (1850–90) despaired of having an heir by a Mossi woman, he took a Fulani wife.[26]

643 The Mogho Naba had no formal wedding ceremony. The task of intro-
585 ducing a new wife to the royal harem fell to the Pughtiema. She and her
[302] assistants welcomed the wife in a prescribed fashion. First they shaved all the hair from her body. They then bathed her in warm water to which shea butter and ritual herbs had been added, and during the bath they recited the ruler's genealogy to impress her with her new status.[27] The Pughtiema advised her on the need for proper deportment, and warned her that
[301] adultery was punished by death. To close the ceremony, a smith fastened to the girl's wrists and ankles the silver or brass bracelets that identified her as a wife of the Mogho Naba. If the bride was still a child, she was often allowed to return to her father's house until she reached childbearing age. If she was past the age of puberty, her marriage was consummated without further ceremony, and she joined the ranks of the ruler's wives.

644 The wives who lived in the palace were divided into three groups. The
595 first group included the wives who lived with the Pughtiema in a section of the palace harem called the *zaka sanga* ("large courtyard"). These women were all past childbearing age and no longer received nocturnal visits from the Mogho Naba. They had their own fields in the vicinity of the palace and cultivated them with the aid of the samande-kamba, the pages they had adopted, and their own children. The women of the second group, those of the *zagbilin* ("small courtyard"), were mostly in their thirties or forties and still sexually active. They received occasional visits from the Mogho Naba, but fewer than his younger wives. These women also cultivated their fields with the help of the young men of the court.

The third group of wives, the *dogunba* ("keepers of the household"), was the most important. The dogunba prepared the ruler's meals and satis-

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fied his sexual desires. Since these women were in the monarch's favor, they were better dressed than the other wives and received more attention from him. The dogunba generally cultivated a large field in common with the aid of the palace retainers, but some insisted on cultivating their own fields instead. Like the other wives, the dogunba usually lived in huts of their own. Childless women sometimes shared the same hut until one of them became pregnant and had to set up a hut for herself and her child.

Those wives who lived in special villages under the supervision of eunuchs rarely went to the palace. Usually, they were past childbearing age or had lost favor with the monarch. They cultivated plots of land, spun cotton, and prepared locust-bean flour, locust-bean "balls," and shea butter. They kept a part of the produce for their own use and sent the remainder to the palace stores; the same arrangement obtained for all three categories of palace wives.

The Mogho Naba's heir was usually born while his father was still Crown Prince. He was never born in his father's compound because, unlike other Mossi women, the wife of a Mogho Naba or Crown Prince returned to her father's house for confinement. As soon as she announced her pregnancy, the Pughtiema or one of the older wives held a ceremony to notify the ancestors. Once the rite had been completed, the wife was sent to her relatives for fear that she might be harmed by her less fortunate co-wives. If the child was a boy, the ruler or Crown Prince was notified immediately, because the important privileges of a first-born hinged upon this notification. Since several wives of the Mogho Naba might be pregnant at the same time and errors might be made about the onset and duration of pregnancy, primogeniture had to be established immediately to forestall dynastic conflicts. For example, it is commonly believed that the present Doulougou Naba was born several days before Mogho Naba Sagha II (1942–57) but was deprived of the nam because the messenger who brought news of his birth reached Mogho Naba Kom after the messenger who announced Sagha's birth. Undoubtedly, such allegations were sometimes used to foster and support dynastic rebellions.

So strong was the fear that the most likely heir to the nam would be harmed by jealous co-wives that the child and his mother never returned to the palace except for brief visits on ceremonial occasions. The young prince remained with his mother's relatives and was guarded and educated by servants sent from the palace. If his father was on the throne at Ouagadougou when the boy reached the age of ten, he was formally installed as chief of Djiba district, the traditional seat of the Crown Prince. If his father was not on the throne, the boy remained with his mother's relatives and went to Djiba when his grandfather died and his father was installed as Mogho Naba.

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went to Djiba when his grandfather died and his father was installed as Mogho Naba.

The origin of Djiba's status as the seat of the Crown Prince is rather obscure. The people of the neighboring district of Nobere say that Djiba was founded by a "companion" of their own founder, Naba Biligo, one of the numerous "eldest" sons of Mogho Naba Oubri, the implication being that Djiba was supervised by Nobere. However, no one seems to know when Djiba's status changed or what happened to the ancient family who used to govern it. The consensus is that in earlier times the heir presumptive to Ouagadougou did not necessarily become chief of Djiba, but was given any district whose chieftainship was vacant when he came of age. Dim Delobson reports that Djiba became the district of the Crown Prince sometime during the seventeenth century, when Mogho Naba Zombere, who had reigned for sixty years, found it necessary to establish a permanent seat for his heir.[28] However, Dim Delobson does not report under what conditions Djiba was chosen, nor does he say what happened to the local ruling lineage when this transfer took place. That the transfer was carried out in the manner reported by Dim Delobson is not doubted, because each new Mogho Naba obtained districts for his relatives in this way. Through this process, the people of the ancient ruling lineages were usually reduced to the level of commoners, and this is apparently what happened to the rulers of Djiba.

The first public sign that the young prince was being prepared for the nam came in the form of a summons commanding him to go to Ouagadougou to be installed as Djiba Naba. On his way to the capital, he visited several villages where the local Tengsobadamba made sacrifices to the earth goddess in his name. He took this opportunity to meet with the district chiefs and their assembled village chiefs; he was entertained by them; and in turn he distributed gifts to the old women, whose praises were considered especially effective in bringing health and long life. When the boy finally arrived at the capital, he lodged at the compound of the Kambo Naba, head of the palace guard, until the Mogho Naba and his ministers installed him as chief of Djiba.

The installation rites for the Crown Prince were very similar to those already described for the Mogho Naba, and identical to those for the district chiefs. During the ceremony, no mention was made of the fact that the prince was the son of the Mogho Naba. The only special feature was that when the prince went into the courtyard after the ceremony to render homage to the Mogho Naba, he sat in an area assigned to him by custom. When the ruler appeared, the prince followed the Gounga Naba, who was pro-

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vincial minister for Djiba, and rendered homage to the sovereign. After this reception the prince went to the Gounga Naba's compound, which henceforth was his headquarters whenever he visited Ouagadougou; for, like other district chiefs, he had to consult with this minister before seeing the monarch. Everyone in the kingdom had to follow the political hierarchy, even the ruler's heir.

The young prince remained at his host's house and from there visited the other important officials, in the order of their rank, receiving from each presents of sheep, millet beer, kola nuts, and sometimes wives. He then visited the Imam of the Ouagadougou Moslem community, where he received a blessing in the name of Allah and was given kola nuts and millet water sweetened with honey. On the fourth or fifth day the prince went to a small village called Zoangha, where he made a sacrifice to his ancestors and requested their protection against all enemies.[29] He returned to Ouagadougou on the same day and was given a palace escort to accompany him to his district.

During his journey, the royal heir had the opportunity to establish or re-establish friendly relations with district chiefs who were now his peers, but who might someday become his subjects. He visited in turn the war leader at Tansobatenga, the Koubri Naba, the Ipelse Naba, and the Kondrin Naba. Each of these chiefs offered him livestock, slaves, and wives. He, in turn, distributed salt (a valuable commodity) to the old women and gave kola nuts and other commodities to the chiefs' head wives. The Baganmini Naba presented the prince with a special quiver of arrows, and the chief of the Fulani at Bedego gave him a pretty maiden and one of his best bulls. The prince spent a few days with each of his hosts, but stayed for seven days in Bere, a district bordering on his own. The Bere Naba gave him a wife, a robe, and a cow, and sent messengers to the village chiefs of Djiba to announce that their chief had arrived in Bere. The chiefs then journeyed to Bere, pledged allegiance to their ruler, and presented gifts to him. On the seventh night there was a ritual (whose main features are unclear), in the course of which the prince entered Djiba secretly on horseback, accompanied only by one servant, one groom, and the nobles and chiefs of Djiba.[30] Most members of the escort who had accompanied him from the capital were left behind at Bere, and followed only when the prince had established himself in his district. When the prince's band entered Djiba under cover of darkness, it was met by the local Ouidi Naba, who ruled the district in the absence of a Crown Prince. The Ouidi Naba now became the prince's protector if the boy were still young, or his most trusted adviser if he were old enough to rule by himself.

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As soon as the prince arrived, the Ouidi Naba made preparations to receive the chiefs of such local districts as Manga, Nobere, and Basgana, who visited the prince and brought him wives, livestock, and money. During a seven-day period, other chiefs and well-wishers visited the new chief and offered him gifts. When this period was over, the new Djiba Naba gave wives to the noble members of his escort and livestock, money, and kola nuts to the commoners and serfs, and sent the group back to Ouagadougou. Then he settled down to the life of a typical district chief, governing his villages in the name of the Mogho Naba, paying him tribute, and settling disputes among his villagers. Dim Delobson reports that the other district chiefs and the heads of such principalities as Boussouma and Conquizitenga formerly sent presents to the Djiba Naba when they sent their annual tribute to the Mogho Naba.[21] But this contradicts all that I heard and saw of the relationship between the royal heir and the other district chiefs. They treated him as an equal and showed no deference to him either in private or on ceremonial occasions. As a matter of fact, in the presence of the Mogho Naba, the royal heir actually effaced himself before the other district chiefs. This behavior served to preserve the concept of equal access of all members of the ruling clan to the ancestral nam. The Mogho Naba was head of the ruling group as well as political leader of the Mossi. His son, on the other hand, was often a junior in terms of age and generation within the ruling group, but politically he was on the same level as the other district chiefs. The sovereign could not show by his behavior that his son was either actually or potentially superior to the other Nanamse; nor could the prince presume to be haughty because of his strategic but accidental relationship to the actual possessor of the nam. Had he tried to do so, he might have ruined his chances of being selected to take over the "house" of his father and his father's fathers.

The relations between the Mogho Naba and his children, including his heir, were characterized by formality—at least in public. Nevertheless, the ruler took a vital interest in the training and welfare of the youthful Djiba Naba. Mogho Naba Wobogo (1890–96) reportedly had the Ouidi Naba and the Baloum Naba of Djiba executed because the Crown Prince died under strange circumstances while under their care. Yet the Mogho Naba was not expected to enjoy seeing his son and heir, because of the Mossi father's traditional anxiety regarding those individuals who would profit most from his death. At the assemblies of district chiefs called by the Mogho Naba, the royal heir was not even greeted by his father; moreover, the heir usually stood at the edge of the assembly and left without attending the customary feast. However, there is considerable evidence that the Mogho

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Naba regularly saw his son in private, and that the prince often interceded successfully with his father for the lives of rebels or criminals.

The Mogho Naba seldom saw his younger sons, who usually remained with their mothers' patrilineages until they were old enough to be assigned district chieftainships or sent to live in villages controlled by the Baloum Naba. He was rather suspicious of these boys, who, if certain traditions are believed, were not averse to plotting the death of the Djiba Naba in order to succeed to the nam. The district chiefs also feared these younger sons, in whose favor they were often deposed by the Mogho Naba. Almost all of the dynastic changes that occurred in the Mossi districts seem to have stemmed from a ruler's attempt to find districts for his brothers or his younger sons.

The ruler was less concerned with the welfare of his daughters and female relatives. Their marriages seldom benefited the political system. As a matter of fact, the behavior of a royal princess usually strained the relations between her husband and the ruling lineage. The reason for this was a status conflict: as wives, they had low prestige in Mossi society; but as relatives of the Mogho Naba, they enjoyed high status. This contradiction made it difficult for them to accept the low estate of wives. Consequently, they clashed with their husband and often dominated the women and co-wives in his compound. Since few Mossi men tolerate strife within their household, these noble wives often withdrew from their husband's home and established one of their own. The one exception to this pattern was the ruler's eldest daughter, the Napoko, whose ceremonial duties at his death and during the interregnum compelled her to remain loyal to the husband chosen for her by the king. Like her brother, the Crown Prince, if she violated any of the traditions and thus became ineligible to fulfill her duties to her father and to the state, she endangered the country at its weakest moment, when the government was being transferred from the deceased Mogho Naba to his successor.

The death of a Mogho Naba was usually attributed to foul play or supernatural forces. When Mogho Naba Sagha II died in 1957, a report from Ouagadougou stated that the Governor of the Upper Volta had felt constrained to have an autopsy performed to quell rumors that the monarch had died of poisoning.[81] The obvious function of such rumors was to dramatize the gravity of the situation during the interregnum.

Because the Mogho Naba was usually accompanied by a page, it was often this boy who witnessed his death. It was the page's responsibility to notify the Baloum Naba, who notified, in order, the Ouidi Naba, the Larhalle Naba, the Kamsaogho Naba, the Gounga Naba, the ruler's children,

643 763 [645] [793] the Tansoba, the members of the royal sub-lineage, and the district chiefs. The Tengsoba of the Ouagadougou area was also notified. Because he was a descendant of the aboriginal Ninisi population that "owned" the land, he supervised the burial ceremony.

[701] The Mogho Naba's death was kept secret, and no mourning was allowed until the Crown Prince had arrived at the capital and the Tansoba had recruited an army to protect the realm against would-be usurpers of power. Then the cry was raised in the palace, to reverberate throughout the land, 643 that "the fire had gone out." Once the ruler's death had been announced, 764 the country was plunged into an interregnum, which was characterized by 669 ritual and often by actual anarchy. The people in the towns immediately looted the markets and stole their neighbors' goods; the prisoners and captives in stocks were released by their guards; the nakomce in all the territories, districts, and villages subjected the local populations to robbery and pillage; and the members of the monarch's babissi began their intrigues for power. The traditional sanction for this anarchy was that only when people suffer during the breakdown of political control do they really appreciate the sovereign's role. The Mossi declare (with some truth) that no one was safe during the interregnum. However, as we shall see, the ruler was symbolically kept alive, and the country was never without effective political leadership.

766 When the Tengsoba arrived at the palace, he was joined by five hereditary funeral chiefs: the Pazany'tengsoba, the Tampouy Naba, the Benghin 644 Naba, the Toghin Naba, and the Tanghin Naba. In the ceremony that fol- 643 lowed, he gave permission for the royal grave to be dug. Meanwhile, the ruler's body was prepared for burial in the traditional manner by his female relatives and laid in state in the zongo. These women kept vigil over the body, shouting and weeping. Only the five ministers of the realm and the male members of the ruler's babissi were allowed to pay homage to the corpse within the zongo. All other mourners had to pay their respects to the monarch's eldest daughter, who, as Napoko, was dressed in the dead sovereign's clothes and sat in his place before the zongo. As her father's symbolic representative, she held daily court and received greetings and homage from all visitors until a new ruler was chosen. The drummer who sat by her side declared to all visitors, "You say that the Mogho Naba is dead! Well, who is that sitting there? Tell me! Is that not the Mogho Naba?"

766 The ruler was buried the day after he died, at the end of an elaborate 643 ceremony. Libations were poured out to the ancient rulers, and sacrifices [782] made to them. All the important officials and members of the royal mini-

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mal lineage segment except the pretenders to the throne shaved their heads as a sign of mourning. The royal pretenders donned sheepskin mantles to signify that they were willing to "eat the nam." Once the ruler had been buried, the country settled down to an uneasy peace until the eighth day, when the funeral ceremonies took place. In the meantime, the Napoko symbolically held daily court, and the Tansoba's army acted as a check against the attempts of ambitious princes to seize power by force of arms.

Two days before the funeral, the Kamsaogho Naba selected the Kourita, who was to replace the Napoko as the living symbolic representative of the dead Mogho Naba. The person chosen to be Kourita was usually a young son of the deceased king, but since this person was banished from the capital, most of the royal wives hid their young children or fled the palace with them.[33] Once the Kourita had been chosen, the Kamsaogho Naba performed a ceremony (similar to those connected with the divine kings of the Near East) during which the youth was given one of his father's horses, dressed in his father's clothes, and given his father's youngest widow as a wife. He was then paid the homage due the Mogho Naba, and after receiving many gifts from the dignitaries, he was banished from Ouagadougou forever. As he went through the country, he was treated like the Mogho Naba and given many wives and presents. If he should chance to return to Ouagadougou or see the new Mogho Naba, either or both of them would be killed by the ancestors. Many Mossi districts seem to have been founded by exiled Kouritadamba. These men were undoubtedly among the numerous "elder" sons of past kings who are said to have "refused" the nam and gone to live in the districts now governed by their descendants.

The choice and banishment of the Kourita heralded the funeral rites, which were characterized by numerous animal sacrifices to the ancestors in the name of the deceased ruler. On the afternoon of the first day of the funeral, the Crown Prince mounted a horse and left the palace by the women's door. The Napoko then took the bridle of her brother's horse and led him and an immense crowd of cavalry, armed warriors, and musicians around the palace walls three times. After the third round, the Napoko demanded that her brother give her a personal servant as a present; he hesitated, but finally granted her request. The Napoko was then lifted up by the warriors, who shouted as they carried her home. The funeral thus came to an end.

All Mossi potentates tried to emulate the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou in matters of pomp, ceremony, and government.[34] Their courts were inferior to his, but only because they were less powerful and less wealthy.

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Naba was responsible for checking these depredations, but he had little coercive force since these nobles were infinitely superior to him in rank.

The Mogho Naba held his five ministers responsible for the administration of the districts within their provinces. Therefore they had to function as liaison officers between him and the district chiefs. Every morning, in order of precedence, the ministers reported the news they had received from their provinces since the previous day. At this time, the Mogho Naba also gave them messages for their districts. Later in the day, the ministers presented to the ruler those persons who had come from their provinces to the capital with special grievances, requests, or gifts. Delicate affairs of state were left for the evening, when they were discussed by the Mogho Naba, his minister or ministers, and other important persons.

From all reports, these administrative affairs kept both the ministers and the Mogho Naba quite busy. Binger, who could barely conceal his displeasure with Mogho Naba Sanum, gives this critical but otherwise highly illuminating view of the Mossi ruler's administrative activities:

> The duties of Naba Sanum are not too important. They consist of receiving visits throughout the day. In the morning, at about six o'clock, the drums announce that the ruler has arisen. When he has washed and refreshed himself with a meal, his captives and his wives go to his chamber to salute him. Then comes the turn of strangers, people of the neighborhood, petitioners, and others. They squat before the reception area until the ruler deigns to appear. When a large number of people have gathered, one of the [pages] goes to notify the ruler, who then arrives, sits on his cushion, and casts an amiable glance on the gathering while all present snap their fingers. As soon as Naba Sanum is seated, the petitioners and visitors hurry toward the monarch, throw themselves face down on the earth, and cover their heads with sand. Then each of them gets up and presents a gift of greater or lesser importance, in cowries or foodstuffs, according to what he wishes to ask. Then the [pages] come and say to the ruler, "A certain man has brought a sack of cowries, or a goat, or an ox. He desires to speak to you." The ruler thanks all of them with a *nif kende* (thanks) and retires into his chamber. It is well known that not one out of fifty petitioners was given the opportunity to have his wishes heard. Those who were heard had first spoken to an attendant who, after being paid in advance, had put off their case indefinitely by stating that it would be dealt with next. . . . Since the monarch's days are so well filled, one easily understands why he finds it difficult to deal effectively with the internal and external affairs of his kingdom; in any case, Mossi country is in a period of decadence that will only be aggravated with time.[35]

The activities Binger considered frivolous were, on the contrary, important for the proper administration of the kingdom. The Mogho Naba had to receive petitions from the districts and transmit administrative orders to

3. Finally, a third lot, composed of young girls and young boys, was distributed among the warriors and put into their charge. The boys will be employed until further notice as grooms to the warriors; later on, those who prove themselves useful and docile will be kept. The others will be sold at the first opportunity. The girls will be given in marriage to warriors who distinguish themselves.[24]

The military campaigns of the Mossi, in contrast to their slave-raiding expeditions, appear to have been well organized. When the Mogho Naba felt that a war was necessary, he summoned his five provincial ministers and the Tansoba to a parley. If war was decided upon, the Tansoba was given full charge of all operations. This man, chosen from a hereditary clan of warriors who lived in a village called Tansob'tenga in Sapone district, was listed among the Mogho Naba's courtiers but seldom appeared at court unless war was imminent. His duties as chief warrior were considered so dangerous that he constantly sought out religious practitioners for supernatural aid. Nevertheless, a war minister who was good and brave was not expected to live very long. If he did live to become gray-haired, the other courtiers made fun of him by pretending that his graying head could only be the result of his having carried a sheep captured in warfare on his head as a present to the ruler.

Once given a mandate for war, the Tansoba collected his magico-religious apparatus and prepared the requisite sacrifices. He then asked the provincial ministers to notify the district chiefs to assemble with their warriors under the leadership of the local Tansobadamba, who were often members of the Tansoba clan. When the district chiefs received this notice, they beat their *zongagondo* (war drums), and the local administrators sent orders for men to the village chiefs. The village chiefs, in turn, beat their war drums to summon their noble cavalrymen and commoner foot soldiers, who came armed with bows and arrows, spears, swords, and clubs, with or without iron tips. The tips of the sharp weapons were often covered with a vegetable poison derived from a shrub of the Strophanthus species. Some of the men also carried guns after firearms were introduced among the Mossi from the desert region and from the coast. Many carried rawhide shields.

As soon as the village contingents had assembled and had gathered their provisions, they marched to the district centers. Then they proceeded either to the place of battle or to Ouagadougou. In the latter case, they became part of the royal army and were joined by the forces of those princes who were prepared to honor their obligation to the Mogho Naba. For example, when the French invaded Ouagadougou in 1896, the Boulsa Dim sent his prime minister "at the head of an army to aid Mogho Naba

Wobogo. However, he did not have to intervene, because while still en route he heard that Ouagadougou had fallen."[35] Thanks to this type of aid, the Mogho Naba was able to gather quite a large army, a fact that contradicts Crozat's belief that the Mogho Naba was a "king without an army."[36]

The early Mogho Nanamse used to accompany their armies into the field, but this practice was later abandoned and was revived periodically only by the more adventurous rulers. (The last ruler to die in warfare was Mogho Naba Doulougou [ca. 1800].) However, it was the Mogho Naba's duty to greet the army when it came to Ouagadougou, to beat the royal war drum, and to turn the troops over to the Tansoba. This officer served as commander in chief of the army, and was assisted by the Gounga Naba, a provincial minister, who served as his aide-de-camp. The Gounga Naba was expected to die rather than retreat in battle, especially if the Tansoba was killed. Two other ministers, the Kamsaogho Naba and the Larhalle Naba, also accompanied the army. The later Baloum Nanamse did not venture into battle, because they had to attend to the personal needs of the Mogho Naba. In early times, however, they accompanied their sovereigns into battle and fought alongside them. The Ouidi Naba never went to war, because it was his duty to look after the kingdom. He had to ensure the interests of all the people even if the royal army was defeated, the country invaded, and the ruler killed or forced to flee. The Samande Naba went to war and served as chief of the infantry.

Scouts preceded each district contingent as the army marched off to battle. Within the contingent, the younger warriors marched in front, followed by older men. It was the duty of the more experienced warriors to make sure that the younger men did not break ranks and run under the stress of battle. Behind the foot soldiers came the cavalry, composed of nobles and of the few commoners who possessed horses. Behind these came the district chief, surrounded by his own palace guard. Several heralds known as *yumba* (sing. *yuma*) accompanied the district forces to exhort them to fight. As the men marched to battle the yumba shouted:

> Men! Your ancestors were not slaves. They were men. They were stronger than anyone else. They did not bathe with water; they bathed with blood. Do you wish to return home to drink millet water and eat bread? Never! A man does not eat bread or drink millet water; a man fights. Your ancestors were not afraid of anyone; you must not be afraid of anyone. Even if you are killed today, you must march ahead, beat your enemies, and take their villages. You must not be afraid!

Mossi armies on the march used scouts to keep a sharp lookout for the enemy or for any evidence that he was aware of impending attack. The tactics these scouts used to avoid detection, such as camouflaging themselves

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726 (764) with leaves and branches and crawling upon the ground, can be witnessed even today at Mossi funerals where men re-enact warfare practices. Whenever possible, the Mossi preferred to take the enemy by surprise, but this was seldom possible when large-scale fighting and massive preparations were involved.

When two Mossi armies drew up to each other, the heralds from both sides issued such challenges and epithets as: "If you men do not wish to die, you should run or you will never eat again. We will have your blood to wash with." In the meantime, the Tansobadamba on both sides deployed their forces in accordance with the number of men available, the spirit of (723) the enemy, and the nature of the terrain. From the description of warfare given to me by an old Tansoba in Nobere district, it appears that the strategy most commonly used was to split the infantry in two while attacking, thus making room for the cavalry to charge through. If the initial charge was successful, the attack was maintained, but if it failed, the army usually turned about and fled. Despite their braggadocio, Mossi commanders seldom insisted that their troops fight against overwhelming odds. (644) However, shame over impending defeat often induced such officers as the (645) Tansoba and the Gounga Naba to fight to the death. For example, during the war between Boulsa and Fada-N'Gourma in 1897, the Boulsa army lost so many men that the Boulsa Dim wanted to commit suicide in his humiliation. However, he was prevented from doing so by one of his subordinates.[27]

Soldiers wounded by poisoned spears or arrows extracted the projectiles if possible, and kept on fighting until they died. Even if they were wounded (789) by an unpoisoned weapon, they did not seek medical aid. Most wounded men believed that they were doomed, because their protective amulets had (727) failed them. For the same reason, a defeated army fleeing a battlefield made no attempt to retrieve its dead and dying, but left them to the vultures. When an army was victorious, however, the Mossi either carried their dead home for burial or buried them on the battlefield, saving some item of their clothing or equipment for the funeral.

Victorious Mossi armies usually pursued the enemy, burning villages as (648) they went. The soldiers killed all the infants and the infirm, and when they (567) fought against non-Mossi, they captured young people to be sold as slaves. Then they collected all the available booty and departed hurriedly, fearing (727) that the confiscated cattle and slaves would slow their return and enable the rallied enemy to catch up with them.[28] If the army could not return home before dark, camp was set up for the night near a body of water so that the Tansobadamba could offer thanksgiving sacrifices. Pickets were later

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651 become overgrown with grass and weeds during the rainy season. This
796 clearing was done to within a few yards of the palace, but was not completed. Early in the morning of the day chosen for the actual rendering of the agricultural tribute, the retainers placed baskets of produce along these paths. During the morning ceremony, the Ouidi Naba presented a basket of millet to the Mogho Naba. Then the Bendere Naba, acting as Sore Naba ("chief of the road"), signaled on his drum, and the men with baskets who were waiting on the uncleared portion of the paths, preceded by drummers and men with hoes, axes, and other tools, began to move forward. The men in the processions raised a din, shouting, singing, drumming, and pretending that the task of clearing was very difficult. From time to time, the more energetic among those who were not carrying bundles ran ahead of the others, turned somersaults, and then, going through the motions of warriors in battle, pranced back into the procession. All the processions came to the shed occupied by the royal drummers and deposited their burdens. These were later retrieved by the palace staff and stored for use in the royal household.

643 The royal household was also supplied with produce grown by the royal
644 wives. Foodstuffs for guests and fodder for the ruler's horses were provided
241 by the people of the Bilbalgo and Dapoya wards, which were under the general supervision of the Kam Naba. Two or three times during the agri-
[464] cultural season, this official recruited extra help from these wards to help
[465] cultivate the fields. In recompense for this *sosogha* (work bee), the laborers were given food, drink, and kola nuts from the royal household. At the
243 end of the year, the harvesting and threshing of the grain from the Mogho
643 Naba's fields was the occasion for an elaborate ceremony, "Mogh Nab'
644 kawinre" ("threshing the ruler's grain").[3]
796 To begin this ceremony, the Mogho Naba summoned a local earth-
[791] priest, the Manougoudougou Tengsoba, to the court. This man, a descend-
[792] ant of the Ninisi, had to perform the propitiatory sacrifices to the earth deity who was symbolized by the threshing floor. After the sacrifices were completed, the Kam Naba went to the threshing floor with the young men of the Bilbalgo and Dapoya wards, who threshed the millet gathered there. The next morning they all returned to the threshing floor with the Bendere Naba and his minstrels, who recited the Mogho Naba's genealogy and sang praises to his ancestors. The drummers then beat out work rhythms and traditional drum patterns to which the workers danced while scattering the millet far and wide. Finally, the dancing stopped, and the Kam Naba drew a line on the threshing floor, dividing the pile of millet in two; the Bilbalgo people gathered one half, the Dapoya people the other. Regard-

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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less of the amount of millet harvested from the Mogho Naba's fields, there had to be one hundred baskets full of grain. If the number of baskets filled with the Mogho Naba's grain fell short of the mark, the serfs and slaves had to make up the difference with the produce of their own fields. The ceremony concluded with sacrifices to the royal ancestors, after which the Mogho Naba's wives, daughters, and sisters gave beer and kola nuts to the laborers.

As head of the central government, the Mogho Naba received revenue in the form of money and livestock which the district chiefs collected from the village people. These were given to him during an elaborate annual ceremony called the "Basgha" ("feast of the royal ancestors"). Several days before this post-harvest festival, the district chiefs and their retainers arrived in the capital and lodged with their provincial ministers. At a designated time during the ceremony, the district chiefs and nobles went to the palace. In provincial contingents and led by their ministers, they walked up to the sovereign's throne and gave the Mossi salute. After they had returned to their places, their servants gave the royal pages the presents they had brought to the palace.

The Dimdamba apparently made their annual contribution to the Mogho Naba at the time of the Basgha. There is one report that they took this opportunity to send gifts to the ruler's son, the Djiba Naba, as well. The Dimdamba customarily sent the Mogho Naba part of the goods they had seized in combat against non-Mossi peoples, as well as a tax (*jado*) out of the goods they had inherited from their predecessors.[3] There is also some evidence that the Mogho Naba solicited goods from the Dimdamba at other times. Crozat says:

> During my first visit to Yako, three envoys from Ouagadougou were at the chief's house. They were tax collectors. They had come to offer the vassal a silver bracelet sent by the sovereign. The Yako Naba responded by sending horses, captives, and cowries to Ouagadougou.[4]

Crozat could not understand this reciprocity between the Mogho Naba and his vassals, and questions whether the Mogho Naba really collected taxes from them. He concludes that the Mogho Naba did receive taxes, "but these are never given to him except in the form of presents which are reciprocated."[5] Crozat found it puzzling and disturbing that many of the Dimdamba had not given the Mogho Naba any "taxes" for several years. He indicated, moreover, that they did not wish to pay taxes to the Ouagadougou ruler even under the guise of an exchange of presents. This was especially true of the Yatenga Naba, who had not sent the Mogho Naba any presents for six or seven years prior to 1890. Crozat surmised that

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Marc, who had the opportunity to check the volume of this trade in 1904 and 1905, estimates that about 16,000 head of cattle and 75,000 sheep and goats passed through the two customs posts in Mossi country. Furthermore, he believes that since "the Mossi also supply in part the markets of Togoland and the market at Bondoukou [Ivory Coast], one may assume a minimum annual export of 20,000 head of cattle and 100,000 sheep or goats. The import of kola nuts is at least 500 tons."[11] It is clear that this volume of trade could not have been achieved so soon after the French conquest. We can only conclude that it existed prior to the coming of the Europeans, and that it brought the Mossi rulers a considerable income.

The Mogho Naba's officials collected taxes from all caravans that passed through his capital. The caravaneers also gave the Mogho Naba important gifts, and he apparently traded with them, even if always to his own profit. Binger states that Mogho Naba Sanum forced horse traders from the Yatenga and Hausa merchants to sell him part of their commodities at one-hundredth the purchase price.[12] Crozat reports that Mogho Naba Wobogo

> appears to have had some business relations with white merchants who came to Salaga every dry season. He sent horses to them in exchange for silver. He claims that he had no reason to be pleased with their integrity, and that the silver they sent him contained plenty of copper. Some traders apparently came as far as Ouagadougou, bringing merchandise of German origin. There was one of them there during my stay. I was told that he was an important *marabout*, a shereef, perhaps an Arab or a Moor, for I was assured that he was very light in color. As was repeated to me several times, his relations with the king were limited to the solemn greetings on Fridays. He never entered the royal hut in spite of being an important marabout. He was at Ouagadougou for about three and one-half months, but he was compelled to return to the coast since the merchandise which he had brought was exhausted. He spoke no Mossi.[13]

All the caravans that passed through Mossi country were obliged to stop and give presents to the district officials. Those caravaneers who tried to elude taxation by going through the forest ran the risk of being attacked by local nobles, who usually confiscated their goods.

The Mogho Naba and the lesser chiefs had "market officials" who taxed the merchants in the markets of their territories. The officials at Ouagadougou, the Kos Naba ("sales chief") and the Raga Naba ("market chief"), were fairly rigorous in their exactions. The Kos Naba collected taxes in cowries for every cow slaughtered at the market, and also took its hump and gave it to the Nemdo Naba ("meat chief") for distribution in the royal household. He also collected taxes on every cow sold in the market, but

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did not usually tax goats and sheep. In lieu of this, he occasionally took one or two of these animals from each herd that passed through the market and sent them to the palace kitchens. Donkeys sold in the market were taxed at the rate of 200 cowries each. Horses sold to the nobility were not taxed, but those exported were.

The Raga Naba collected taxes on the other commodities sold at the market. Cotton weavers paid him according to the size of their bolts of cloth, and cotton growers paid taxes on the sales of their raw produce. The tailors and dyers paid no fixed amounts, but were asked to send clothing to the palace. Every donkey- and ox-load of salt entering the market place was taxed. The smiths were not taxed in cowries, but had to supply the Mogho Naba's wives with hoes and the palace personnel with arrowheads, spear points, and iron clubs. The jewelers also sent bracelets as presents to the ruler. There were no fixed taxes on the cereals, vegetables, and cooked food sold at the market, but each day the Raga Naba, accompanied by several pages or retainers carrying baskets, went from vendor to vendor taking several calabashes of their produce for use in the palace. In addition, the vendors of cooked food had to feed the Mogho Naba's young grooms, who were not normally fed by the palace household. The beer sellers were not formally taxed, but they contributed a substantial percentage of their beverage to palace and market personnel, who demanded the customary *lembgha* ("taste before buying") more frequently and freely than ordinary buyers.

There is some evidence (mainly from European travelers) that the traders occasionally found the caravan and market taxes prohibitive. Binger reports that the high taxes exacted by the Mogho Naba were "one of the reasons why Ouagadougou placed second [as a market town] and Mane was the commercial capital of Mossi country." Binger himself was caught in the institutionalized gift system and wrote sarcastically: "On market day [at Ouagadougou] the receipts are good. People bring everything to the palace, whether it be millet, hoes, or peanuts, and everything is accepted. *All this giving is left to the discretion of the donors.*"[14] The italics are Binger's.

Some of the later Mogho Nanamse appear to have obtained a great deal of revenue through the sale of slaves. Most of these slaves were captured in raids among the smaller groups surrounding Mossi territory, such as the Samo, Gurunsi, and Busansi populations. According to Mangin, Gurunsi and Busansi countries were true granaries for the Mossi, who drew upon them according to their needs.[15] In early times the Mossi chiefs utilized these slaves (*yense*, sing. *yamba*) as agricultural workers, until Mogho

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worked for the Mogho Naba in and around the palace courtyard, and in the fields. They also kept his herds and provided him with animals from their own herds. Like the Dapore, they were seldom sold, but they often had to give their sons and daughters to the Mogho Naba.

The last group of persons who contributed their services to the Mogho Naba were the Kamboinse. Their origin is also unclear. Most of my respondents claimed that the Kamboinse and their chief first came to Ouagadougou from the direction of the Gold Coast, that they bore guns, and that they offered their services as guards to the Mogho Naba.[21] Later on, the sovereign allegedly assigned slaves to the Kamboinse unit, with the result that the entire group eventually took on a serf-like character. The Kamboinse guarded the Mogho Naba's palace and seized for him the goods of persons whom he condemned to death.

The services performed for the Mogho Naba by his pages and other youthful retainers also contributed significantly to the support of his administration. We have already seen how these young men and boys took care of his every need and functioned as important messengers within the royal household. The Mogho Naba also had control over the daughters of his serfs, whom he used to obtain revenue from aliens and subjects alike. Periodically, the Mogho Naba gave one of these girls as pughsiudga to a man, thus obligating him to render goods and services to the court. Moreover, the man had to return the eldest daughter he had by this wife to the Mogho Naba as a future pughsiudga. In this way, the sovereign had a revolving store of women through whom he could bind men to himself in a nexus of obligations, and from whom he eventually received additional women.[22]

The provincial ministers of the Ouagadougou kingdom occupied such a strategic position within the central administration that anyone rendering gifts or tribute to the Mogho Naba always gave presents to them as well. Their main source of revenue, however, came from the villages under their direct control, and from the retainers who lived in their compounds and in their wards in the capital. The economic relations between the ministers and their villages were similar to those between the district chiefs and their villages, and will be discussed below. The retainers, serfs, and slaves who served these ministers provided them with many of the services their counterparts rendered to the Mogho Naba. They kept their houses in repair and provided them with firewood and with fodder for their horses. Many of them also cultivated fields for their masters. Whenever the ministers needed extra goods or services, they called on those persons who lived in their compounds or in their wards. For example, hun-

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ably been younger sons sent to rule in conquered territories claimed that their ancestors were direct descendants of Ouedraogo and Oubri. Thus, to the Mossi, the power to rule was intimately linked to closeness of descent from the royal ancestors. The supernatural power of these ancestors, and the vigilance they were believed to maintain over the affairs of their descendants, were regarded as important factors in Mossi government.

From the moment when the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou or any other Mossi ruler "drank the namtibo" and thereby received the nam of his ancestors, he had the right—indeed, the duty—to offer sacrifices to these ancestors in the name of his subjects. Every night, throughout Mossi country, the Baloum Naba of every ruler performed an act of supplication (Kwaga Basgha) to the ancestors. He beseeched them to protect the subjects of their descendants through the night, to maintain peace in Mossi country, and to grant health, children, and prosperity to all Mossi. This nightly ceremony was climaxed yearly by an elaborate ritual in honor of the ancestors (called the Basgha in some areas, and the Pelegha, Filigha, or Kinkiriga in others) that began at the highest levels of the government and ultimately linked every Mossi chief and lineage head.

The Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, like the other Mogho Nanamse and Dimdamba, initiated this ceremony in his own kingdom. His celebration, called "M'barengma," was held at the end of the Mossi agricultural year and after the Soretasgho. Thus, the M'barengma was a New Year's festival in thanksgiving for good crops, as well as the annual Feast of the Dead. A few weeks before the first moon of the new year (the *ki-basgha* or *ki-pelegha*), the Mogho Naba ordered his soghondamba and samande-kamba to clean up the palace buildings and courtyards—an activity intended to notify the ever-vigilant ancestors that preparations were being made to offer sacrifices in their honor. A short time later, the Mogho Naba gave grain from his fields to the Pughtiema so she could prepare millet water for the sacrifices. Present-day Mossi insist that part of the grain came from the first ears harvested that year and part from those of the previous year. This was supposed to symbolize the continuity between crops, mirroring the continuity between the ruler and his ancestors. A few days before the principal ceremony, the Mogho Naba ordered the Larhalle Naba to pour millet water and sacrifice chickens on the graves of former Mogho Nanamse.

Shortly before the ki-basgha moon appeared, the ruler had to leave his palace at night to elude the ancestors, who had been attracted by the preparations and who were expected to be angry when they discovered that the sacrifices were not yet ready. The unjust ruler feared ancestral sanctions; the just ruler that his ancestors might want him to join them. One night he

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Mogho Naba Sagha II (1942–57), who was instrumental in reuniting the Mossi people into one territory, the Upper Volta.



The Mogho Naba's daughter, the Napnko, impersonates her deceased father at his funeral ceremonies. Note that she wears one of his robes, his slippers, and his bonnet, and has his sword behind her.

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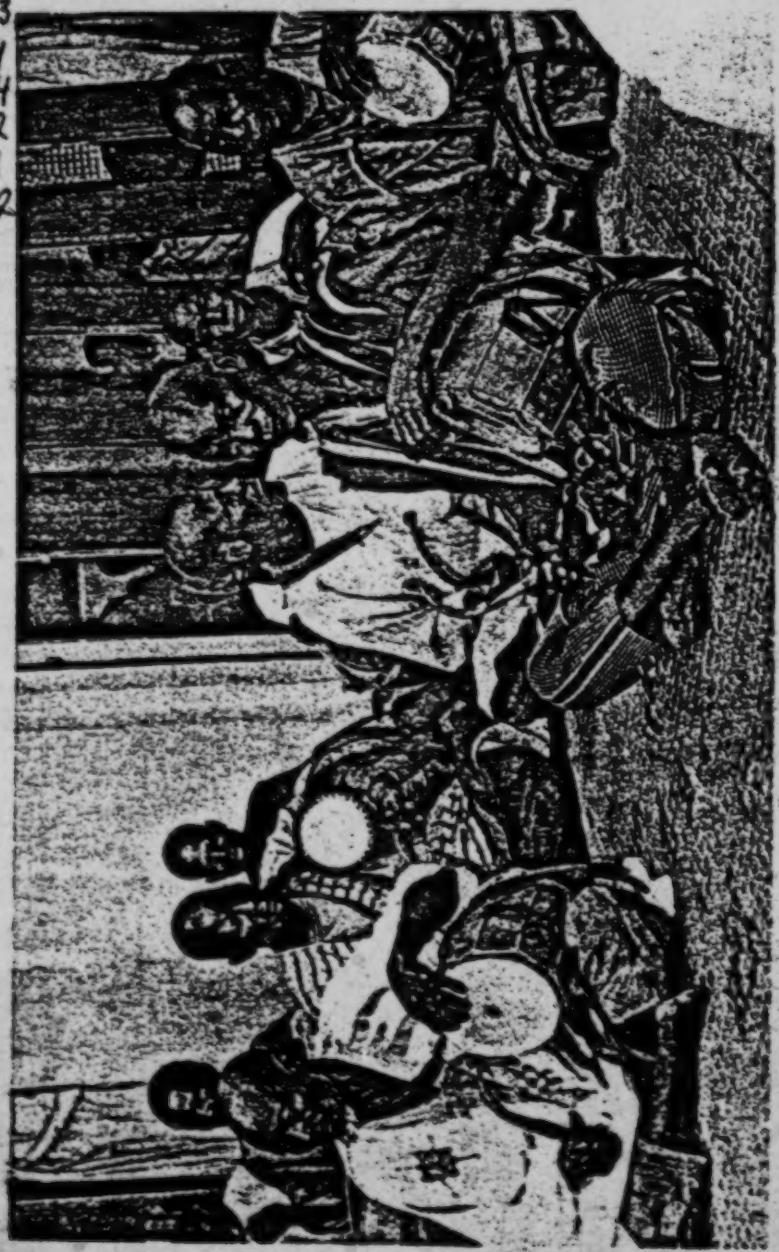

The musicians of the royal court, the Bendere.

[r. 178-C]

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Mogho Naba Kougri at court. He is flanked on the right by his pages and musicians, and on the left by members of the Muslim community.

[p. 171-E]

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Mossi chiefs of being a modernist, was elected as the first Vice-President of the new government. Not only was the Mogho Naba deprived of the opportunity to become the African head of the Upper Volta, but such stalwart supporters of the chiefs as Conombo and Bouda were left out of the government. Thus, after twelve years of opposition to Houphouët-Boigny, Mogho Naba Sagha and his chiefs were finally defeated. Their defeat was made even more ignominious by the elevation of a non-Mossi commoner to a position of dominance over the Mossi chiefs.[37]

Having lost out in the Upper Volta, the Mossi chiefs had no spokesman when the new Vice-Presidents of the Government Councils of the French West African territories and the European Presidents of these territories met at Dakar to discuss the problems of the truncated French West Africa Federation. No one mentioned the problem of the position of the traditional chiefs. As far as the politicians were concerned, the issue of the chief on the inter-territorial level was dead. It had relevance only in those territories where the chiefs retained some influence.

In an effort to consolidate their hold on the Upper Volta, the PDV-RDA members in the PDU met in September 1957 and sought to convert the PDU into a territorial subsection of the RDA. This move was resisted by the supporters of the chiefs within the PDU, especially by Conombo, who as leader of the PSEMA, an important faction within the PDU, had been completely eclipsed by Coulibaly and the PDV. Conombo resigned from the PDU and announced his intention to rebuild the PSEMA with the support of the Mossi chiefs. On November 12, however, before his plans could be put into action, Mogho Naba Sagha II died in Ouagadougou and political activities in the Upper Volta came to a standstill. A period of national mourning was proclaimed, and politicians from all parties gathered to pay their last respects and to eulogize the monarch.

Sagha's death, like that of all Mossi princes, was ascribed to foul means, although it was clear that he had succumbed to uremia. The people reacted to the interregnum by looting, and the shopkeepers in Ouagadougou and surrounding areas were compelled to close their establishments. "The people of Ouagadougou ran to Saba, but the merchants there were quite diligent, and needed no police force to protect [illegible]"[38] It was reported that those wives of the deceased ruler who were not at the palace at the time of his death took off the brass anklets denoting their royal status and became free women. If this actually happened, it was an unprecedented occurrence.

When the Mossi traditional electoral college convened to choose a new Mogho Naba, it reportedly considered the candidacy of both Moussa Con-

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the Upper Volta met, discussed "the affair of October 17," and issued a statement dissociating itself from the Mogho Naba's action, reaffirming its desire to collaborate with the established authority, and requesting a clarification of the status of chiefs in the new order. The Government Council of the Upper Volta welcomed this statement, and hastened to reassure the chiefs that their status was not in danger: "It is not a question of damaging the traditional chiefs as a group, but rather of stigmatizing vigorously an act emanating from a superior chief like Mogho Naba Kougri, the consequences of which, unforeseen as they were, could have placed all the Mossi chiefs in a regrettable and irreparable position."[47]

The Mogho Naba had obviously reached a political impasse, and he next turned his attention to creating a new image of the chieftainship. To this end, he married a young Mossi woman in accordance with the civil statutes of the state, thus becoming the first Mogho Naba and the first important Mossi chief to do so. A spokesman at the wedding placed this act in its proper perspective with the following words:

> I should now like to underscore the fact that this date, November 22 [1958], will be inscribed officially in the annals of the Upper Volta. For the first time in the history of our country, an Emperor, the person who best symbolizes tradition, has upset ancestral habits in the interest of progress. For the first time a woman will be given consideration in a royal court where she will be able to feel at her ease. For the first time, the spouse of a traditional chief will have her place near her husband as an equal and steady companion.[48]

The politicians were apparently prepared to recognize the eminence of the chiefs as long as they did not attempt to intervene in the affairs of the state, and a number of them attended the Mogho Naba's wedding. Among those present were the Presidents of both the Government Council and the Territorial Assembly, parliamentarians from various parties, and the mayors of Bobo-Dioulasso and Ouagadougou. On December 10, 1958, the Territorial Assembly confirmed Yaméogo as President of the Government Council. The Assembly also approved his slate of ministers, among them Bouda, the Mossi chief who had once been a strong supporter of the traditional political hierarchy but who now belonged to the UDV-RDA. Then, on December 11, the Assembly decided to adopt the draft of a proposed constitution for the Upper Volta. Articles 2 and 3 of Paragraph I of this constitution state explicitly:

> The Republic of the Upper Volta is one and indivisible, secular, democratic, and social. Its principle is that the government is *of the people, by the people, and for the people. . . .*
>
> *Sovereignty belongs to the people. No section of the population, and no individual, may usurp it.* [Italics mine.][49]

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
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taxes in their markets. The French abolished both of these offices when they took over the country, because they looked upon them as purely exploitative rather than regulatory agents. But like so many other Mossi political institutions which the French have "abolished," the Kos Naga and Raga Naba persist in many of the districts, and perhaps even in such large centers as Wagadougou. These officials persist because one of the basic assumptions of the Mossi is that everything must have a "chief." They believe that even the animals in the bush have chiefs, and if men, too, did not have chiefs then social life would be chaos. Thus, in the rural areas many or most district chiefs have retained their market officials even though the roles of these officials have become highly attenuated and so secretive that their existence is often denied.

Taxes collected at the market places played an important part in supporting the traditional political hierarchy of the Mossi people. The Kos Naba collected 250 cowries in taxes for every beef cattle slaughtered at the market and took their humps and gave them to a palace official called the Nemdo Naba (meat chief) for distribution in the royal household. He also collected 250 cowries on every cow sold there, but did not usually tax goats and sheep. In lieu of this he occasionally took a head or two of these animals from each herd that passed through the market and sent them to the palace kitchens. Donkeys were also taxed at the rate of 200 cowries per head sold in the market. Horses sold to the nobility were not taxed, but those exported were taxed about 300 cowries.

The Raga Naba collected the taxes on other commodities sold at market. Cotton weavers paid him taxes according to the size of their bolts of cloth, and cotton producers paid as much as 20 cowries on especially large sales of their raw produce. The tailors and dyers paid no fixed tax on their wares, but were asked to send clothing to the palace. Every donkey- or ox-load of salt which entered the market place was assessed a tax of 300 cowries. The smiths were not taxed in cowries, but had to supply the wives of the Moro Naba with hoes and the palace personnel with arrowheads, spearpoints and iron clubs. The jewelers also sent bracelets as presents to the ruler. There were no fixed taxes on cereals, vegetables and cooked food sold at market, but each day the Raga Naba, accompanied by several pages or retainers carrying baskets, went from vendor to vendor taking several calabashfuls of their produce for use in the palace. In addition, the vendors of cooked food had to feed the young grooms of the Moro Naba who were not regularly fed by the palace household. The beer sellers, too, while they were not assessed taxes, contributed a good percentage of their beverage to palace and market personnel who demanded the